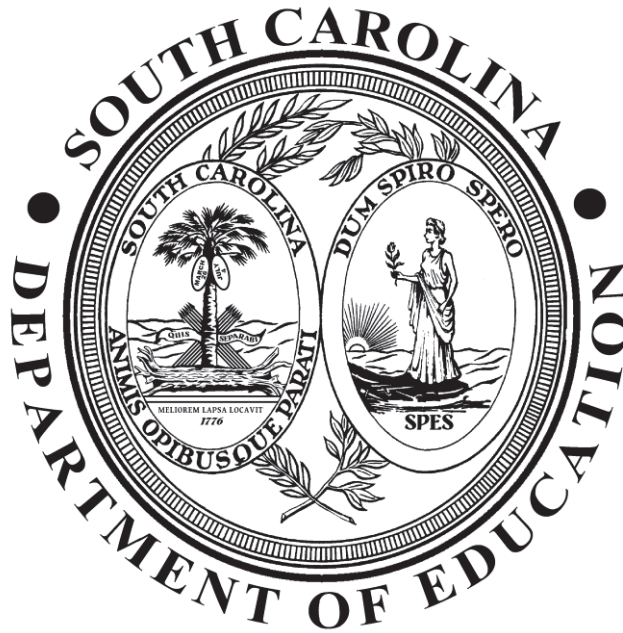# STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MOLLY M. SPEARMAN
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

AccelerateED Task Force

Guidance and Recommendations for 2020–21 School Year

June 22, 2020

Contents

AccelerateED Task Force Members and Contributors

Task Force Members
- Dr. Kathy Coleman, Chairman – Director, Clemson University Sandhill Research and Education Center; Chairman, Saluda County School Board
- Tonya Addison – District Administrator, Florence County School District Four
- Missy Campbell – Chief Financial Officer, Spartanburg School District Seven
- Sherry East – President, South Carolina Education Association
- Dr. Sherry Eppelsheimer – Principal, Wando High School
- Dr. Latoya Dixon – Director of Elementary Programs and Gifted Education, York School District One
- Dr. Harrison Goodwin – Superintendent, Chesterfield County School District
- Chanda Jefferson – 2020 South Carolina Teacher of the Year
- Patrick Kelly – Coordinator of Professional Learning, Richland School District Two; Teacher, Blythewood High School; Palmetto State Teachers Association Representative
- Dr. Brian Newsome – Principal, Gray Collegiate Academy; Member, S.C. Education Oversight Committee
- Chuck Saylors – Vice President, M.B. Kahn Construction Company; Board Member, Greenville County School Board
- Dr. Scott Turner – Deputy Superintendent, Greenville County Schools; Member, S.C. Education Oversight Committee
- Alan Walters – Executive Director, Safety and Risk Management, Georgetown County School District; Member, State Board of Education

Advisory Members
- Dr. Abbey Duggins, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Saluda County Schools
- Dr. Angie Slatton, Director of Special Services, District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties
- Anna Duvall, School Counselor, Lexington High School, Lexington School District One
- Sharon Worley, Coordinator for Counseling and Career Services, Aiken County Public School District
- Scott Powell, Architect, Craig Gaulden Davis
- Sabra Denny, Resource Teacher, Meadow Glen Elementary School, Lexington School District One
- Hollie Harrell, Director, Anderson County Career and Technology Center
- Dr. Rainey Knight, Director of Strategic Innovation, S.C. Education Oversight Committee
- Dana Yow, Deputy Director, S.C. Education Oversight Committee
- Matthew Ferguson, Executive Director, S.C. Education Oversight Committee
- Dr. Lee D'Andrea, Director of College Relations and Professor of Practice, College of Education, Clemson University
- Dr. Anna Hall, Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education, College of Education, Clemson University

- Dr. Thomas Hodges, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, College of Education, University of South Carolina
- Dr. Sandra Linder, Director, S.C. Center of Excellence in Innovation for Mathematics and Science, Clemson University
- Mychal Frost, Director of Marketing and Communications, Rock Hill Schools
- Tony Thomas, Director of Transportation, Darlington County School District
- Wanda Knight, Director of Nutrition Services, Lauren County School District 55
- Robin Bright, Principal, Ballentine Elementary School, District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties

South Carolina Department of Education Staff
- Dr. Sabrina Moore, Director, Student Intervention Services
- Dr. Sarah Longshore, Director, Federal and State Accountability
- Dr. John Payne, Deputy Superintendent, Federal Programs, Accountability & School Improvement
- Rebecca Davis, Director, Special Education Services
- Dan Ralyea, Director, Research and Data Analysis
- Jasmeen Shaw, Director, School Facilities,
- Virgie Chambers, Deputy Superintendent, District Operations & Support
- Dr. David Mathis, Deputy Superintendent, College & Career Readiness
- Victoria Ladd, State School Nurse Consultant
- Sherrie Beaver, School Counseling Personnel Liaison
- Brian Pratt, Chief Information Officer
- Marlene Sellars, Administrative Coordinator
- Dr. Anne Pressley, Director, Standards and Learning
- Stephanie DiStasio, Director, Personalized Learning
- Dr. Quincie Moore, Director, Early Learning and Literacy
- Elizabeth Jones, Director, Assessment
- Angel Malone, Director, Career and Technical Education
- Crystal Dennis, Administrative Assistant
- Ron Jones, Director, Health and Nutrition
- Garry Fast, Director, Transportation
- Mike Bullman, Director of Maintenance, Transportation
- Nancy Williams, Chief Finance Officer
- Ryan Brown, Chief Communications Officer
- Jennifer Austin, Administrative Specialist
- Laurie Traywick, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent
- Ashton Talbert, Administrative Coordinator
- Katie Nilges, Director, Governmental Affairs

Introduction

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and state of emergency declared by Governor Henry McMaster, South Carolina school facilities were closed for in-person instruction from March 16, 2020, to the end of the 2019–2020 school year. During this time, students, families, and educators across South Carolina have experienced an unprecedented disruption to learning, teaching, and daily life. While educators, parents, guardians, and caregivers across the state have partnered together to develop and deploy an incredible array of resources to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of our students, it is undeniable that things have been lost - from learning, to moments, to the daily relationships and interactions that give so many students in South Carolina a sense of safety and wellbeing.

As we move into the 2020–21 school year, our state's education system will continue to face extraordinary, new challenges that will require unprecedented levels of cooperation and coordination among students, families, staff, and school communities.

To assist schools and districts in these efforts, State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman convened AccelerateED, a task force composed of educators and administrators representing all aspects of the K–12 public education system. In the task force's first meeting on April 30, 2020, Superintendent Spearman charged the members with studying barriers to school operations and student learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and providing recommendations on how schools and districts can best meet the needs of struggling learners in the summer and restart the state's public education system in the fall. On May 26, 2020, AccelerateED released its first report with recommendations for how to proceed with summer learning activities. The task force then turned its full attention to the start of the 2020–21 school year, and as a result of twenty-five meetings, put forth the considerations and recommendations outlined within this document.

In making these recommendations, AccelerateED addressed school operations in the current pandemic environment with the guiding principles of first protecting the health and safety of our students, staff, and families and second fostering teaching and learning in an environment that is as close to normal as the first principle allows. Recommendations and guidance are organized into four phases: Immediate Actions, Summer Planning and Preparation, Pre Opening, and Reopening and Continuity of Operations. Within each phase, recommendations are broken down by traditional district operational areas.

The conditions, current public health landscape, and growing body of knowledge surrounding COVID-19 continues to evolve. This reality presents challenges to planning, preparing, and guiding school operations. The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) will continue to coordinate with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and other relevant governing bodies to provide guidance and best practices to districts to inform their decision making for reopening schools and ensuring a successful 2020–21 school year.

Districts and schools are encouraged to communicate with local authorities and always adhere to the most recent recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and DHEC. This guidance is not mandated nor state required. Local school districts continue to

have the authority and flexibility to address their individual needs and be responsive to their local communities.

Phase 1: Immediate Actions
In addition to conducting existing summer operations and instructional opportunities, it is imperative for districts to use the early summer to establish the frameworks and processes necessary to lay the foundation to be fully prepared for the resumption of school in the fall.

State Government and Agencies
1. **Establishment of Health Condition Levels for Schools-** In order to best guide district decision making, the SCDE should collaborate with DHEC to develop clear criteria for determining the rate of spread of COVID-19 in an area. In particular, districts need clear guidance from our public health authorities to determine which of the three health conditions (low, medium, or high spread) an area is in as described in the "Scheduling Models" section at the end of these recommendations. These criteria are needed by districts quickly, so this action should be a top priority for collaboration between the SCDE and DHEC.

2. **Health and Safety Infrastructure Grants**- Many school buildings will need physical enhancements in order to improve health and safety for students and staff. Some of these could include installing plexiglass in front offices to separate staff and visitors; dividers in nurses' areas to create isolation areas; and permanently mounted hand sanitizer stations, HVAC filtering systems, or creating spaces for telehealth evaluations. However, these types of facilities improvements are likely to stretch beyond the financial resources of many districts. As a result, the General Assembly should consider the creation of a Health and Safety Infrastructure Grant to make additional resources available to districts.

3. **Purchase of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)-** The accelerateSC task force has recommended (Recommendation 19 and 21) that the Department of Administration and the Emergency Management Division take the lead in PPE procurement and state implementation plan for a state stockpile of PPE. This action will take advantage of the state's buying power to get the best possible pricing and quantities of PPE. While the SCDE has already taken steps to provide cloth face masks for all teachers in the fall, it should be noted that cloth face coverings are not PPE, as they are intended to protect others from the wearer with any protection to the wearer being highly variable. As a result, face shields may be necessary for some staff at higher risk from COVID-19, and these masks may be preferable to teachers (especially of younger students and English language learners) so their full face is visible to students.

Communications
1. **Local Task Force for Reopening Schools-** If a district has not already done so, it should establish a reopening "team" or "task force." This team should consist of a diverse representation of the community, which should include, but is not limited to: administrators, staff (including classroom teachers from multiple grade levels and content areas), parents (especially PTA and SIC members), and students (where age-appropriate).

In addition to developing district plans for reopening school in the fall, the group should develop protocols to keep the community regularly updated on district planning.

2. **Establishing Ongoing Two-Way Communications-** In addition to sharing information, districts should provide opportunities for meaningful feedback from the community. This includes opportunities for the community to share feedback on their experience with distance learning in spring 2020, new safety protocols, and the potential impact of proposed school operations in the fall on families and businesses.

Human Resources, Finance, and Administration

1. **Survey of Staff-** At the earliest practical time, districts should survey staff to identify those with conditions or concerns that could or will prevent their return to normal in-person job duties in fall 2020. These conditions could include, but are not limited to, underlying health conditions that increase risk from exposure to COVID-19 or living with and caring for individuals with underlying health considerations. Districts should use this information to develop plans for how to meet the instructional needs of students while accounting for the health needs of staff. The collection of survey data should maintain confidentiality consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as well as other applicable state and federal privacy laws.

2. **Staffing Needs Assessment-** Districts should conduct a needs assessment for school counselors, school psychologists, and social workers, including a comparison of current caseloads versus the standards of national association guidelines (Appendix A).

3. **Preparing for Staff Social and Emotional Needs-** In addition to preparing for the social and emotional needs of students, districts should develop plans to make available and deploy resources to meet the needs of staff members that have experienced trauma as a result of COVID-19. These resources could include:

   a. **Mental Health Crisis Response Teams-** Schools and districts should consider establishing a mental health crisis response team focused on student and staff mental health and wellness. The team could include, but not be limited to: a school counselor, special education staff, outside agency therapist, a teacher, school nurse, and administrator trained in trauma awareness. The team would develop a referral system for students and provide resources for staff self-care in efforts to provide ongoing support after COVID-19. A district liaison could be appointed to communicate directly with the SCDE to gather and access newly available resources for student and staff mental health and wellness support.

   b. **Triage Protocol-** A triage protocol is needed to assist in identifying individuals (staff and students) requiring interventions at various levels (beyond the initial corporate "check-in"). Those identified needing additional support will process through the protocol for referral to the crisis response team or student support services personnel (e.g. nurses, school counselors,

school-based mental health counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and referrals to community-based mental health services.)

    c. **Resources-** Districts should evaluate their capacity to provide resources to staff that include, but are not limited to, Employee Assistance Programs or district- provided counseling and mental health resources.

Facilities, Transportation, and Operations (including food services)

1. **Addressing the Digital Divide-** The SCDE and districts should work throughout the summer to use available resources to provide digital access (devices and broadband) for as many students and staff as possible by the start of the 2020–21 school year. Districts should also review and revise technology plans to determine potential steps to expand the number of students with access to devices and broadband outside of school.

2. **Continuance of Wraparound Supports-** Throughout the summer, districts should seek the continuation of wraparound supports for students, such as school meals and access to counseling.

Instruction and Student Services

1. **Determining Student Attendance-** According to recent surveys, there is a strong possibility that some parents will not allow their children to return to school even in the event of the resumption of "normal" operations in August. For example, a May 26th USA Today poll found that nearly 30 percent of parents are "very likely" to choose a home option for instruction in the fall, even if schools reopen. Similarly, the poll found approximately 20 percent of teachers are hesitant to return to campus, with an even higher percentage among older teachers. Given this data, it is imperative that districts enter the start of the 2020–21 school year with a plan in place to address the likelihood that a portion of students and staff will not return to campus due to the increased health risk posed by COVID-19. At the earliest possible point in the summer, districts should either complete or begin the following actions:

    a. **Early Survey of Parent/Family Preferences-** Given the wide variation of COVID-19 conditions by locality, each district should seek to assess student and parent/guardian thoughts on returning to in-person instruction in the fall at the earliest possible moment during the summer. In taking this step, it is important for districts to provide clear, consistent, and transparent communications to families about district efforts to plan for multiple contingencies in order to best meet student needs in the fall. In addition to gathering family preferences on returning to school, districts should also seek to determine the rationale for family preference, with a specific focus on determining if a family has a COVID-19 related rationale for not wanting to send a child back to in-person instruction. Such reasons could include an underlying health condition that increases the risk posed by COVID-19 for a child or for a caregiver at home. Districts should clearly communicate to families that the purpose of this survey is to determine general preferences in the community and *not* for families to declare intent for fall learning formats. To reinforce this purpose, districts should consider setting this

survey to collect responses anonymously. While the results of an early survey could be out-of-date in August due to changes in health conditions, the results of the early survey can equip districts with essential information for planning for the fall. The collection of survey data should maintain confidentiality consistent with the ADA as well as other applicable state and federal privacy laws.

b. **Development of District Policy for Distance Learning Access-** During the summer, districts will need to develop policies on criteria to determine student eligibility to participate in a distance-learning environment as a result of COVID-19 related reasons. In the same way, districts have criteria for determining student eligibility for Homebound services, they will need criteria for determining eligibility for distance learning as a result of COVID-19. Such criteria could include a child or caregiver/family member falling in a higher-risk category for COVID-19. To enhance consistency across the state, districts should work in close association with the SCDE and South Carolina School Boards Association (SCSBA) on the development of their policies. Policies should include a provision that students enrolled in magnet or special enrollment programs will not forfeit their slot as a result of opting for distance learning.

Phase 2: Summer Planning and Preparation
The unique challenges posed by COVID-19 to resume new-normal school operations will require districts to adjust their traditional planning routines for the opening of the school year. To best prepare for instruction in the fall, districts should work to address the following recommendations during the mid-summer period (approximately the entire month of July after the July 4th holiday).

State Government and Agencies
1. **School Funding-** As the General Assembly returns in September to complete the Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations process, it is imperative that a per pupil increase to the Education Finance Act is carefully considered and included. An increase would not only allow the state to move closer to the FY 2020–21 estimate of the base student cost ($3,164) as provided by Revenue and Fiscal Affairs, but would also help account for the increased costs districts are incurring due to added protocols and precautions in order to keep students safe. Currently, based on the weighted pupil units, the base student cost is funded by the state at $2,489 per pupil. With the undertaking of several new and necessary safety measures by districts, the General Assembly will need to strongly consider the financial impacts districts will be facing and include this increased funding to the base student cost.

2. **Waiver from Testing Requirements-** As noted in the AccelerateED Summer Learning and Operations Recommendations, the SCDE should seek a waiver from all accountability-related testing requirements (federal and state) for the 2020–21 school year for the purpose of making more time available for learning to help remedy and recover lost time and learning during spring 2020.

3. **Waiver for Certification Renewal and Maintenance-** Similar to the action taken during the summer of 2020, the SCDE should enact a one-year grace period for educators due for certificate renewal on June 30, 2021. This action will enable educators and administrators to reallocate the time that would be dedicated to completing the renewal process to instead focus on the continued work of meeting the unique needs of students resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, the SCDE should suspend for one year the student learning objectives process for teachers on continuing contracts. This action would again increase the capacity of teachers and administrators to react to the unique challenges of the coming school year.

4. **Removing Earnings Cap for Retired Educators-** Districts are likely to face staffing shortages across all positions as a result of a variety of COVID-19 related factors, a fact that is complicated by existing difficulties for districts in finding sufficient numbers of schools nurses, school counselors, special education personnel, and others who may provide essential student services. Districts are also likely to face challenges in finding qualified individuals to serve as long-term substitutes in cases of illness or resignation. To help districts address these challenges, the General Assembly should consider removing the cap on earnings for retirees.

5. **Addressing Shortages of Student Services Providers-** Most schools in our state have struggled to provide sufficient levels of staffing for key student services positions. This shortage poses an on-going threat to our schools' abilities to meet the needs of our students during and after the pandemic. As a result, the General Assembly and the SCDE should consider taking actions to address this structural problem, including:

   a. Development of an alternative pathway for certification of school counselors, such as additional certification track programs for individuals who already have other types of counseling degrees (see Appendix A).
   b. Providing a salary incentive program that would sunset in 3–5 years to fill critical needs positions. This would provide time to better identify permanent funding solutions.
   c. Establishing a goal of funding elementary school counseling positions to reduce the current ratio of 1:800 students to 1:300 students pursuant to SC Code of Laws 59-59-100 (Appendix A).
   d. Creating a caseload requirement for school psychologists based on recommendations by the National Association of School Psychologists of 500–700:1 (see Appendix A).

6. **Review of Emergency Drill Procedures-** New school procedures resulting from COVID-19 will require a thorough review of all emergency drills (active shooter, fire, tornado, earthquake, bus evacuation, etc.) and shelter-in-place procedures in order to make modifications to encompass social distancing and other health guidance when possible. State agencies having jurisdiction over such drills should review standards and send out revised protocols to make such accommodations. In conducting their review of procedures, state agencies should also carefully consider potential undue

burden on the instructional operations of a school due to potential execution of a drill within the parameters of existing health guidelines.

7. **Development of School Health and Safety Sharing Website**- The SCDE should develop and host a website for districts and schools to share best practices and ideas related to reopening schools. This resource could potentially develop over the long-term into a School Health and Safety Resource Center, potentially in partnership with an institution of higher learning.

8. **Development of Distance Learning Resources-** To best meet the needs of all learners, the SCDE and VirtualSC should continue to develop resources for K–8 learners. In addition, the SCDE should work with districts to build learning object repositories to provide access to resources that can enhance the capacity of teachers to provide distance learning.

Communications
1. **Review of School Calendar-** In response to the continuing threat of COVID-19, districts should, at the earliest possible time, re-evaluate their published calendar for the 2020–21 school year. In doing so, districts should carefully consider potential calendar adjustments that could reduce the risk posed by COVID-19 to student health and learning while allowing for 180 days of instruction. These considerations should include:

    a. **Start Date-** Districts should determine the start date that is best aligned to their local situation. In making this determination, districts should consider the best placement of the five additional Learn, Evaluate, Analyze, Prepare (LEAP) days for grades 4K–8 (discussed in the Pre- Opening Phase) as well as their local health situation. In some cases, this may require districts to seek a waiver from the SCDE to move their start date to earlier than the third Monday in August, but in others, districts may want to consider pushing their start date back to after Labor Day. Given the impossibility of predicting health conditions in August, districts should exercise caution and discretion in reviewing start dates. Any consideration of moving up start dates should be carefully weighed against the recent increased spread of COVID-19 in our state. In the event that the General Assembly appropriates the funds for the five LEAP days (see Phase 3), school districts should strongly consider moving back the scheduled first day of the 180-day school year. This action is necessary due to staff and families that may have already scheduled travel or other family commitments in alignment with the existing school calendar. Districts should seek to finalize and communicate any alterations to their start date to families and staff at the earliest possible date.

    b. **School Calendar-** In addition to evaluating the start date for the 2020–21 school year, districts- in consultation with staff, families, and community partners- may want to re-evaluate the calendar for the entire year. Calendar alterations designed to address the past and potential future impact of COVID-19 could include plans such as:

i. **A "year round" calendar of nine weeks of instruction followed by a two-week break**. This could prove beneficial, both as a tool for remediation practices and to provide greater schedule flexibility in the event of a second wave of COVID-19 in an area.

ii. **Extended winter break**. This model is similar to what some universities in the state are planning to implement, with the elimination of all holidays prior to Thanksgiving and students not reporting back to campus from Thanksgiving through the start of the second semester in January 2021. For use in K–12 education, this would most likely require a period of distance learning during December 2020. The benefits of this schedule would allow for increased social distancing during a time of year that is most susceptible to a resurgence of COVID-19. The costs to be considered by districts prior to moving to this calendar must include an analysis of the childcare impact on families in December.

iii. **Scheduling by Semester-** Districts may find it useful to engage in semester calendar discussions and/or approval, rather than passing an entire school year calendar.

c. **Scheduling of Distance Learning Practice Days-** All districts should include in their calendar one or two "distance learning practice days" during the first nine weeks of the 2020–21 school year. These days should be used to implement their Distance Learning Contingency Plan (see #2 below). On these days, the district should shift to full distance learning, even if health conditions allow for school buildings to be open and fully operational. Research and guidance on "continuity of learning" has shown that opportunities to practice distance learning prior to a crisis requiring a prolonged period of school closure has positive effects on student learning. Scheduled practice days in the early part of the coming school year will help students, staff, and families be prepared to respond to any shift to distance learning that could be required due to health conditions. Districts should clearly and widely communicate plans for distance learning practice days to families and community partners far in advance to aid in their planning for those days.

2. **Distance Learning Contingency Plan-** Districts should enter the new school year with a clear Distance Learning Contingency Plan to implement in the event of a return to full distance learning due to a resurgence of COVID-19. This plan should be accessible in multiple languages and should include specific expectations and procedures that differ by grade level and could be presented in a distance learning handbook or other format. *The development of an effective plan will require the engagement of representatives from most district departments as well as administrative and teacher representatives from elementary, middle, and high schools in the district.* Districts should begin communicating this plan to families and community partners prior to the start of the 2020–21 school year in order to increase the effectiveness of distance learning protocols if it becomes necessary for them to be enacted. While many of the items listed below

may already be included in normal school operations, the Distance Learning Contingency Plan should include, at minimum, the following:

   a. Daily schedules for students indicating expectations for hours of engagement, with special focus on times protected for synchronous or live instruction (when resources permit). This schedule should be built in such a way that students with multiple classes on their schedule never have synchronous sessions for different classes at the same time. These schedules should include instruction in all content areas on a student's schedule. To the extent possible, districts should also seek to construct grade-level schedules to have minimal overlap for periods of synchronous instruction. This step can help facilitate family support of learning from home and reduce the burden on a family's internet access caused by multiple simultaneous video conference sessions.
   b. Clear instructions and tutorials on how to access core tools of distance learning, including learning management systems.
   c. A plan for students without digital access, either due to a lack of broadband or a lack of devices. This plan may also be necessary for younger learners, with consideration that rich distance learning can also be achieved without having to be delivered completely online.
   d. Expectations for communication to families and students, including frequency and format.
   e. Expectations for when work and materials will be posted for students (could be daily or weekly).
   f. Expectations for due dates and timelines for submission of student work.
   g. Plans for how to track and document student engagement and "attendance" during a prolonged period of distance learning.
   h. Expectations for feedback and grading for student work.
   i. Contingency plans for Individual Education Program (IEP) teams on how to access, services, and supports will be provided in the event of a resurgence of COVID-19 (The Office of Special Education Services (OSES) is developing a form that can be used to assist with this that can be an attachment to the IEP).
   j. Plans for how to provide substitute instruction in the event that a teacher becomes ill during a period of distance learning.
   k. Plans for how to resume in-person school operations (with all or a portion of students) when it becomes safe and appropriate to do so based on public health guidance.
   l. Plans for working with Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to meet the needs of high school students enrolled in dual enrollment courses.

3. **Update on Planning for Reopening-** *In order to provide as much clarity as possible for students, families, and staff, districts should seek to provide an update and overview of their scheduling and operational plans to their community at least 20 days in advance of the scheduled first day of the 2020–21 school year.* Districts can, and should, communicate that plans can and likely will change as new information becomes available, but this July update will help the community with planning for school in the fall.

<u>Human Resources, Finance, and Administration</u>
This summer will present an exceptional challenge for Human Resources (HR) departments. In addition to their traditional summer work of filling existing vacancies in classrooms and other positions, HR teams will need to determine how to address several unique staffing needs resulting from COVID-19.

1. **School Nurses-** According to a recent survey that did not include responses from all districts, preliminary data showed 166 schools/programs that did not have a full-time equivalent nurse. Given the ongoing risk posed by COVID-19, it is critically important for districts to seek to staff each school with a full-time equivalent nurse. In the short term, this could most likely be achieved by using Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act or other federal funding sources to provide for a temporary or substitute nurse when funding does not permit the creation of a permanent hire. However, moving forward, the General Assembly and districts should carefully consider budget priorities to provide for a permanent, full time nurse position at each school with consideration given to a 1:750 student ratio as recommended by Healthy People 2020 (USDHHS) and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

2. **Supporting and Partnering with Educator Preparation Programs-** In addition to preparing for instruction in the fall of 2020, districts should consider their ongoing role in preparing the future educators of our state. While health protocols are likely to limit access of visitors to school buildings for the foreseeable future, it is imperative for districts to partner with our educator preparation programs in order to provide the type of field-based, clinical experiences that are essential to effective educator preparation. Failure to do so could lead to long-term negative consequences for our future teachers and for their students. To meet this need, district HR departments (or whichever office oversees educator preparation partnerships) should consider the following:

   a. **Access to Clinical Experiences-** Districts should develop protocols and procedures that allow for clinical experiences for pre-service educators both prior to their student teaching placement, as well as full time student teaching. These experiences include practicums and supervised clinical experiences with collegiate faculty. As such, collegiate faculty access to school facilities is equally important for the purposes of supervision and facilitation of these experiences. To the greatest extent possible, these experiences should be in-person, but districts could also work with IHEs to develop virtual models if necessary based on local health conditions.

   b. **Technology Access-** Due to the possibility of a return to distance learning during the year, districts (if they do not already do so) should develop procedures to provide student teachers with access to essential instructional technology platforms such as learning management and student data management platforms. Having these procedures in place will equip student teachers with a more robust preparation experience and to meaningfully assist with instruction, planning, and evaluation of student work in the event of distance learning.

c. **Waiver on Instructional Hours Requirement-** As it did in spring 2020, the SCDE should be ready to evaluate and, if necessary, waive, instructional hours requirements for student teachers in the event of a prolonged period of distance learning.

d. **Teacher Cadets-** High school students participating in Teacher Cadets courses should be afforded access to other schools in their district by following the same sign-in protocols in place for school staff when a Cadet is working in a school other than their home high school.

e. **Waiver for Student Teachers Working with Students-** The SCDE and districts should consider waiving restrictions preventing full-time student teachers from working in a classroom without the presence of a school employee or substitute teacher. Removing this restriction can provide schools with greater flexibility to meet the needs of small groups of students when the school deems the student teacher is ready for the task. This restriction should only be waived for student teachers completing their final full-time student teaching experience, with permission from the educator preparation program in which they are enrolled, and who have passed all appropriate background checks required by the SCDE.

f. **Facilitation of Ongoing Partnerships-** Many school districts maintain ongoing partnerships with educator preparation programs. To the extent possible, districts are encouraged to explore ways of maintaining these partnerships to maintain professional learning opportunities and support student academic achievement.

3. **Preparing for Waivers-** Districts should adopt a blanket local resolution suspending future policies that conflict with statutory waivers or extensions granted by the Governor and/or the SCDE.

4. **Insurance Coverage-** Contact district/school insurance carrier to discuss specifics of liability coverage.

5. **Updates to Leave Policies-** Districts should revise posted leave policies to align with changes in federal leave policies resulting from COVID-19 related legislation like the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, as well as conducting a review of current DHEC Guidance for Employers During COVID-19 concerning COVID-19 related Workman's Compensation. Districts should also make sure to post and disseminate the U.S. Department of Labor's Employee Rights information. Districts should also work with the SCSBA when making updates to leave policies related to COVID-19 and use of sick leave.

6. **Staff Emergency Contact Information-** Encourage staff to update contact information, verify the health and safety of employee and employee families, and communicate to staff a return-to-work plan at the beginning of the school year and/or at other necessary returns. Work with your HR department and/or local school attorneys.

7. **Budget Review-** Districts should review and potentially revise their budget planning for the 2020–21 school year and build in contingencies that address funding or lack of state funding for cleaning, supplies, PPE, etc. Districts should also exercise discretion and caution with budgeting and expenditures given uncertainty about the available revenues the General Assembly will have when it reconvenes in September to finalize the 2020–21 state budget.

8. **Contingency Leadership Planning-** Districts should develop an alternative command structure that can be implemented if administrative and/or key employees are unable to work.

9. **Review of Attendance Incentives and Penalties-** Districts should review and consider discontinuing attendance incentive programs for staff and students in order to diminish pressure for an individual to report to school when feeling ill. Similarly, districts should review policies and procedures included in handbooks and athletic codes of conduct to remove punitive measures for absences when a student is experiencing symptoms of or has potentially been exposed to COVID-19.

10. **Health Reporting-** Districts should develop a health reporting process for the fall to ensure that the superintendent and district office are informed about daily health conditions in schools. This plan should place special emphasis on identifying reasons for student and staff absences.

11. **Job Description Review-** As able, districts should seek to review and revise job descriptions to better account for duties and expectations for future prolonged periods of school closure and distance learning.

Facilities, Transportation, and Operations (including Food Services)
1. **Cleaning Protocols-** Districts should develop cleaning protocols based on the latest DHEC, CDC, and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidance and determine if it can be handled by staff or should be supplemented with contracted services. These protocols should include routinely cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects that are frequently touched following the manufacturer's instructions for products used (see Appendix B). Ventilation (air exchange rates) and the percentage of outdoor air should be increased when possible. Please see the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers COVID-19 Building Readiness Guide. Implementation of cleaning protocols should be conducted exclusively by trained custodial staff.

2. **Utilization of Resources for Classroom and Facilities Configurations-** The South Carolina chapters of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the Association for Learning Environments (A4LE) have offered to host a series of webinars on how to reconfigure classrooms and other spaces within buildings to create more distance between students. These resources would also offer ways to restructure health and facilities spaces to allow for separation between those seeking help for illness from those

seeking first aid and medicine administration. Districts and schools should take advantage of this free resource when available.

3. **Cleaning and Facility Preparation-** Review the plan and supply inventory to thoroughly clean and disinfect all buildings, desks, buses, equipment, and other surfaces prior to students and/or staff returning and after return, using CDC, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and OSHA guidelines.

4. **Safety Plans-** Districts and schools should review and revise School Safety Plans to account for new risks associated with COVID-19.

5. **Review of Potential Costs of Changes to Food Service-** Social distancing guidelines and other health requirements are likely to require schools to revise the way meals are served and eaten. As a result, districts should conduct an analysis of the potential increased costs related to required changes to supplies, packing, and cleaning.

6. **Visitation Policies-** Districts should engage in a comprehensive review of school visitation policies. These policies should seek to minimize outside guests from entering the instructional areas of the building while maintaining plans for ensuring safe access to the building for essential non-employees such as student interns. To the extent possible, districts should seek to utilize technology and video conferencing to reduce the need for traditional activities like parent-teacher conferences that require outside guests to access the school. Whenever a visitor does arrive at school, districts should maintain thorough records, including the individual visiting, contact information, the time of the visit, and the locations in the building visited. These records can assist local health authorities in the event they need to conduct contact tracing. Vendor access to the school should be restricted to hours when students are not present.

7. **Facilities Usage Plan-** Districts should engage in a comprehensive review of policies regarding use of school facilities by outside groups. Revised policies should reduce or eliminate the use of facilities for anything beyond school operations in order to reduce the potential spread of COVID-19 in a building.

8. **Review of Transportation Capacity-** Districts should conduct an analysis of their capacity to meet projected transportation needs in the fall. This planning should include running practice bus routes based on the most current guidance from DHEC about maximum occupancy on a bus.

Instruction and Student Services

1. **Plan for Fall Distance Learning Groups-** Districts should use the data from their surveys of parents/guardians and staff during the Early Summer Phase to project potential distance learning needs for the start of the 2020–21 school year. **(Note- this projection is necessary for conditions where at least some portion of students can return to school in August. Districts will also need to plan for a situation where no students can return, which is addressed later in these recommendations)**. The actions a district takes will be inherently localized based on factors like survey results, staffing, available

resources, etc, but in any scenario, *it is imperative that districts avoid situations where teachers are required to plan and implement instruction for students via in-person and distance settings during the same day.* To prevent that scenario, potential courses of action could include planning to develop and/or utilize the following:

a. **Existing Virtual Learning Platforms-** Districts should first seek to meet the needs of students that can not return to school through existing virtual learning platforms and resources. Many districts already have virtual school options available, especially at the high school level. VirtualSC can also provide a good resource for students at the high school level. However, if a district lacks virtual learning resources for all learners and all grade levels, the following options may be considered as other possible formats for distance learning.

b. **Distance Learning Sections-** If staffing permits, districts could choose to assign staff to a fully distance learning schedule of students that will not return to in-person instruction. Districts should seek first to staff distance learning "classes" with teachers that are uncomfortable returning to work, but districts should also consider teacher aptitude and skill in leading distance learning. In this model, teachers would interact exclusively with students via in-person or distance learning instruction. To achieve this, schools would build their master schedules with distinct in-person and distance learning sections. In addition to staff availability, the feasibility of this option will be largely dependent on a sufficient number of students in a grade level/course that need distance learning access (recommendations for determining this number of students is addressed in the Pre-Opening Phase). Districts should also develop policies to ensure that livestreaming practices are consistent with privacy protections for staff and students.

c. **Live Streaming of Classes-** Districts could equip classrooms with the equipment necessary to livestream instruction daily to students that are participating from home. This option could be especially valuable for districts with insufficient staffing to provide for full "distance learning sections." In those instances, it may also be necessary for the SCDE to facilitate sharing of services across districts. For example, a livestream of a teacher's classroom could be made available to students across multiple districts. For areas with insufficient broadband access or sufficient numbers of computing devices, this type of instruction could also be made possible through installation of the necessary equipment for datacasting by ETV. In the event of live streaming, districts should identify teachers with the aptitude and skills to create a rich learning environment for both students in-class and those participating via live stream. In this scenario, districts would also need to assign additional staff to a live streamed classroom to assist the instructor with tasks like parent and student communication, evaluation of student work, and data entry. In effect, the district would need to create "classes within a class" for the purposes of all classroom-related activities beyond planning and delivery of direct instruction. Live

streaming options should not be used to increase a teacher's student load beyond normal class size limits.

d. **Asynchronous Learning-** Districts could provide instruction through asynchronous means as necessary. In the event of insufficient technology for effective distance learning, hard copies of materials can be provided, but this should be viewed as a last resort. Instead, districts should prioritize getting needed technology to students in order to access the wealth of asynchronous learning materials online. Districts could utilize adaptive learning platforms or pull from existing resources from the SCDE. Another asynchronous resource could be recordings of instruction by teachers in the district, but districts should not ask teachers to record materials for students beyond those on their roster without additional resources to support instructional development (could be additional planning time, instructional materials, compensation, etc.).

2. **Declaration of Intent-** By late July, districts should have guidelines in place to determine student eligibility for distance learning as a result of COVID-19. At this point, districts should share these guidelines with families as well as the district's safety protocols and anticipated scheduling model for opening in the fall (for more on scheduling models, see Phase 4). Based on the guidelines and scheduling model selected by the district, interested families should be allowed to apply for distance learning services as a result of COVID-19. These applications should be used to finalize distance learning sections in master schedules, and districts should set clear deadlines for the return of applications to give schools sufficient time to make any necessary adjustments to their master schedules. ***Districts should clearly communicate to parents that those applying for a fully distance-learning experience would only be able to return to in-person instruction in the event of space availability for in-person sections.*** In effect, districts would not be able to increase the size of an in-person section beyond the recommended student-to-teacher ratio in order to accommodate requests by parents to return their child to in-person instruction. Availability for students to return to in-person instruction should be re-evaluated at the end of nine-week grading periods based on in-person student enrollment numbers as well as any adjustments to instructional practice resulting from updated health guidance from DHEC. The collection of survey data should maintain confidentiality consistent with the ADA as well as other applicable state and federal privacy laws.

3. **Professional Learning**- As noted in the AccelerateED Summer Learning and Operations Recommendations, districts should seek to streamline professional learning opportunities to align to those topics most necessary to address the unique challenges staff will face in the new school year. The Summer Recommendations specifically noted two central topics for summer professional learning: ***distance learning and instruction and implementation of multi-tiered systems of support.*** Summer professional learning can be based on a variety of district or SCDE developed resources. Districts should also seek to prioritize in-district professional learning over learning that requires travel (for cost and health reasons), and districts should seek to build the

capacity of their own building-level experts in order to decrease reliance on outside facilitators when possible. To the greatest extent possible, professional learning related to distance learning should be led and facilitated by those who gained experience planning and implementing instruction during the spring 2020 closure period. These actions will promote teacher leadership and career advancement and give all staff ongoing access to a local expert that can facilitate sustained professional learning through formats like coaching or professional learning communities. Districts should offer professional learning on an ongoing basis throughout the month of July to give teachers the most possible time to reflect on and apply learning to their instructional practices. In determining topics for professional learning, highest priority should be placed on the following topics:

a. **Distance Learning and Instruction-** The continued threat posed by COVID-19 increases the likelihood that some or all students will experience distance learning during a portion of the 2020–21 school year. As a result, districts should provide staff with professional learning opportunities on distance learning topics such as promoting student engagement, assessment design and delivery, providing rich feedback to students, and how to maximize available instructional technology and platforms.

b. **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)-** While most districts have provided professional learning on MTSS in recent years, focusing on these concepts will be especially important in an environment where most students have experienced or are still experiencing trauma associated with the pandemic. As a result, special attention should be focused on learning in the areas of Tier 1 intervention and support for all students as well as trauma-informed instructional practices. In addition, professional learning in this area can be augmented and enhanced through focus on the tenets of culturally relevant teaching.

c. **Effective Communication and School-Home Relationships:** Given uncertainty about the health situation in 2020–21, effective communication with parents, guardians, and community partners will be more important than ever. As a result, districts should establish a consistent delivery system and set of expectations for school-home communications, with, at minimum, consistency in communication methods, platforms, and schedules within a school. Based on this communication plan, districts should consider providing professional learning on tools and strategies for effective communication with students' families.

d. **Implementation of Learning Progressions and Essential Readiness Standards-** During the summer of 2020, the SCDE will be developing learning progressions and essential readiness standards. The purpose of this work is to support teachers in determining the greatest areas of instructional priority during the 2020–21 school year in light of the disruptions to learning caused by spring 2020 school closures. Instructional staff will need collaborative professional learning opportunities to unpack these progressions and standards in order to

best inform instructional practices in the fall. ***Note- these learning progressions and essential readiness standards will be released as they are finalized throughout the summer. The SCDE is developing professional learning resources to accompany the release of the learning progressions and readiness standards.***

4. **Completion of Student Evaluations-** With the sudden closure of schools in spring 2020, many evaluations of student needs were not completed. In order to best prepare for the opening of school operations in fall 2020, districts should seek to complete as many of these evaluations as possible. In particular, high priority should be placed on completing evaluations for:

   a. **Special Education-** Once it is safe to do so, districts should complete the components of initial evaluations and reevaluations that could not be completed due to the COVID-19 school closures and the restrictions of social distancing. When able, districts should begin conducting eligibility meetings, IEP meetings, and other meetings once all required components have been gathered. This time should also be spent planning for the assessment of impact on all students and particularly on how special educators will help facilitate this assessment for students with disabilities. For students with disabilities for whom it would not be safe to return to school, the IEP team will need to determine how services might be delivered in an environment that would be safe for the student.

   b. **English Learners-** The existing screening tool for English learners under federal (ESSA) requirements is an in-person tool. As a result, districts must make sure to comply with existing DHEC regulations regarding physical distance when using the identification screener and properly sanitize all technology used. Districts should seek to screen students that were provisionally identified during the spring school closure as well as any recommendations for evaluation that are still in progress. Districts should also continue to communicate with parents and family members in their home language.

5. **Preparing for the Social and Emotional Needs of Students-** Schools and districts should review their current state-mandated MTSS implementation plans and results of their Self-Assessment of MTSS (SAM) to create a committee focused on embedding social-emotional learning (SEL) (see Appendix C). The committee would work to identify all available resources in the district and how those resources can be combined to provide the best possible SEL programming for students and staff. Districts can also utilize resources like the guidance from the National Association of School Psychologists in Appendix D.

6. **Prevention of Bullying and Harassment-** While schools have focused on bullying prevention a great deal in recent years, the impact of the pandemic on society will necessitate that districts and schools revisit their policies and procedures to account for potential new sources of bullying and harassment in schools. Addressing these new

potential areas of bullying requires the same vigilance and consistency as what schools apply for other forms of bullying- both in person and digitally. These possible new areas could include bullying or harassment based on:

    a. Students who have personally contracted COVID-19 or are related to someone who has contracted COVD-19;
    b. Accusations or taunting of students about alleged exposure to COVID-19;
    c. Taunting or harassment against students that utilize additional protective measures, such as wearing of masks, avoiding close proximity to others, etc.; and
    d. Threats by students to expose peers or staff to COVID-19, regardless of whether the threat has substance.

7. **Supply Lists-** Schools should conduct a review of the standard student supplies list and make adjustments that are sensitive and responsive to current economic conditions. A review of supply lists should also account for restrictions on shared use of resources and materials by students.

Phase 3: Pre-Opening
While there is no way our students can gain back everything lost during the final months of the 2019-2020 school year, South Carolina can and should take steps to ensure students are as prepared for learning as possible when the 2020–21 school year begins. Districts must keep in mind that any efforts to prepare students for the coming school year need to be focused on increasing student learning rather than simply making up lost days and time. As a result, the Pre-Opening Phase (approximately two weeks prior to the scheduled start of the school year) will be critically important for a successful return to school.

Communications
In order for instruction to effectively resume in the fall, it is imperative for districts to strategically develop communications for families and community partners prior to the reopening of schools. In particular, these plans should include the following:

1. **Procedures and Safety Protocols-** Clear communication about new safety protocols and procedures is essential for their success. These communications should include both the procedures and clear explanation for the rationale for new procedures, and the communications should be available in diverse formats and languages to ensure accessibility for all. In addition to use of traditional communications via email, websites, and social media, districts should seek to work with community partners to enhance dissemination of information. These groups could include School Improvement Councils, education associations, civic organizations, business advisory groups, faith-based groups, and other community partners. Districts should also seek to produce a diverse array of print and visual communications, including videos demonstrating physical facility changes and implementation of new school procedures.

2. **Back-to-School Events-** Due to health conditions, schools may be unlikely to host traditional in-person back-to-school events for large groups of students and community members. In this event, districts should develop plans for how to deliver these same types

of experiences through digital, TV, and print resources. Districts may also opt, if health conditions permit, to conduct smaller group events or home visits.

Human Resources, Finance, and Administration
1. **Staff Training-** Many of the new operating procedures for the 2020–21 school year will require additional staff training beyond topics typically addressed at the start of the school year. The specific topics necessary will vary based on district procedures and resources, but regardless of the topics, districts should plan in order to deliver training in the most efficient manner to ensure effective operations and minimal time burden on staff. Districts should also evaluate existing annual training to determine if training in some topics can be streamlined or eliminated in order to increase available time for addressing new COVID-related procedures. Topics for new training include, but are not limited to:

   a. New safety protocols and procedures, especially those related to the health protocols necessary to reduce the potential spread of COVID-19, including recognizing symptoms and prevention techniques;
   b. Accessing and basic operations of new computer systems and processes developed to prepare for potential distance learning, including Learning Management Systems; and
   c. Training for custodial staff on the latest information on effective methods of cleaning and disinfecting school facilities.

Facilities, Transportation, and Operations (including Food Services)
1. **Allocation of Classroom Furniture and Materials-** In the weeks leading to the start of school, districts and schools should evaluate furniture and materials in all classrooms to ensure that rooms are equipped to comply with health requirements. This includes ensuring that rooms do not have more student desks/seats than a room can accommodate based on existing social distancing guidelines of six feet between desks.

Instruction and Student Services
1. **LEAP Days-** The South Carolina General Assembly is currently debating appropriating a significant portion of funding through the CARES Act to allow for *five additional LEAP days at the start of the 2020–21 school year for students in grades 4K–8.* While the CARES Act funding appropriated by the General Assembly would be limited to instruction for students in grades 4K–8, this does not preclude districts from providing similar additional days for students in grades 9–12 if district-level funding is available. The additional LEAP days at the start of the year are not intended to address all instructional content missed in the spring of 2020; instead, these days should be used to prepare schools to return to operations and to assess where students are in order to open the school year with a plan for how to strategically engage in interventions and facilitate student learning. Districts should plan for and implement LEAP days according to the following recommended guidelines:

   a. **When should the days be placed?-** In our state, school calendars are determined by local districts within state law, which remains the case for the

learning preparation days. As a result, districts may schedule the LEAP days *prior* to the typical days allocated for teacher preparation at the start of a year or *after* the teacher preparation days. However, due to funding restrictions, these days must occur at the **start** of the 2020–21 school year rather than at the end of the year. This is because all funds appropriated for this purpose must be expended and reimbursed by December 30, 2020.

b. **Which students should attend?-** The funding provided to districts is specifically for all students in grades 4K–8. However, this does not mean that all 4K–8 students in a district must be involved in all five learning preparation days. Those students deemed critical to attend, as well as how many days they will need to attend, should be determined based on the identified needs of students in a district. Districts should place the highest priority on engaging students that have demonstrated significant learning gaps or specialized needs, such as students that:

   i. Experienced low engagement during the 2020 distance learning period;
   ii. Have demonstrated learning gaps on prior assessments and diagnostic tools;
   iii. Are in process for evaluation related to special education or English learner status; and/or
   iv. Are homeless or migrant.

c. **What activities should occur during learning preparation days?** In planning for LEAP days, districts should develop a clear plan to document and communicate activities and desired outcomes. These activities may include:

   i. **Revisiting Prior Content and Skills-** While an additional five days of instruction can not fully gain back everything that was lost during the period of school closure, districts may use learning preparation days to provide a head start on learning in the new year by giving students opportunities to revisit prior content and skills. These activities should be especially targeted to students identified as in greatest need for additional learning time by districts, and these efforts could be facilitated and enhanced by district use of adaptive learning platforms.

   ii. **Diagnostic Activities-** The disruption of the 2019–2020 school year led to diminished availability and reliability of traditional tools for assessing student readiness and learning such as grades and test scores. As a result, districts may use learning preparation days to engage in diagnosis of student readiness in small groups. These activities can include those traditionally mandated at the start of the year (KRA, etc.) or those selected by a district to meet specific needs. Districts can also consider using existing MTSS-screening tools. Finally, districts could use these days to complete in-progress evaluation of students for eligibility for services as an English learner or under the Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act (IDEA) (as described in greater detail under #4 of Step 2 of this section).

iii. **Data Analysis-** Time during learning preparation days can be used to give staff the chance to engage in collaborative analysis of existing data sources, including data on student engagement levels and grades from spring 2020, Literacy Assessment Portfolios, and formative assessment data from tools like Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) and district benchmarks. This work is especially important for teachers of courses with "looping" standards (i.e.- Algebra 1 standards "loop" from pre-Algebra standards). The establishment of collaborative data analysis can also afford teachers the opportunity to garner authentic and meaningful data and feedback from a student's prior teachers that can provide invaluable insights that are unlikely to be captured by diagnostic test instruments alone.

iv. **Social and Emotional Preparation-** Districts may use learning preparation days to help students with building social and emotional readiness for a return to school. This can include opportunities to experience closure with last year's teachers, build relationships with new teachers, and work with counselors and other staff to address student feelings about the disruptions caused by COVID-19 and by the return to school. Schools should also provide opportunities for students to discuss and process the shared experience of the pandemic. The SCDE is engaging with the SC Department of Mental Health and other partners to identify braided/blended mental health supports to address both students' and teachers' physical and emotional wellness needs, and these resources could be wonderful tools for learning preparation days.

v. **Review of IEPs-** Decisions about lack of progress and additional needs for students with disabilities depend on data about progress and needs for all students. If an IEP team determines supplemental services are needed, this may mean a change in the student's least restrictive environment or a change in the intensity or amount of services and supports. Some decisions about compensatory services, particularly for students with more significant disabilities, can be made as soon as the team has gap data. Other decisions about supplemental services will be made after remediation/recovery services have been provided for all and additional data have been gathered. Once remediation/recovery services have been provided for all students, the IEP team should consider the following questions:

1. What was the student's rate of progress from August 2019 to March 2020?
2. Where was the student performing at the end of in-person services in March 2020?

3. Where is the student performing at the beginning of the school year?
4. If there is a gap, how much of the gap is due to the impact of the closure on all students and how much of the gap is due to student's disability?

vi. **Establishing Routines and Procedures-** All educators know the value of establishing clear and consistent routines at the start of the school year, and that will be critically important in the coming year due to the introduction of routines and procedures that will be new for all staff and learners. As a result, districts could use learning preparation days to introduce and acclimate students to school procedures and expectations (especially those instituted in response to COVID-19) as well as finalizing student schedules. This, in turn, will accelerate the capacity of schools to focus on instruction of content and skills when the regular school year begins.

vii. **Professional Development-** Since districts do not have to bring in every student on every learning preparation day, districts could schedule time for teachers to engage in extended professional learning opportunities. This professional learning should be specifically designed to help teachers meet the unique challenges of re-starting school in the fall. Priority should be given to topics such as developing instruction aligned to learning progressions and essential readiness standards, developing and delivering engaging distance learning experiences, and meeting the social-emotional needs of students, including the use of trauma-informed practices. Some of these resources are currently available through VirtualSC, but districts can also develop their own resources based on their staffing and localized needs.

2. **Social-emotional check-in/SEL Plan-** Starting with LEAP days, students should have access to ongoing SEL and support in a school-wide program/plan embedded inside classrooms. All school staff and all students need an initial "check-in" to process the trauma of COVID-19 and school closures. There are free resources available from a number of sources which can be vetted and posted by the SCDE. Guidance should also be provided on appropriate community partnerships to support mental and emotional health for all school stakeholders.

Phase 4: Reopening and Continuity of Operations
The reopen and continuity of operations phase outlines those recommended procedures and protocols that should be implemented and followed as students and staff return for the 2020–21 school year. These recommendations should not only be considered at the start but also throughout the school year to ensure successful continuation of teaching and learning.

Communications
1. **Preventative Measures-** In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other illness, districts and schools must have plans in place to ensure that sick employees and students stay home. This plan should also extend to encouraging and insisting that students and employees remain home if someone in the household has COVID-19 symptoms or is being tested for COVID-19. The importance of communicating this message is a central and essential component of a district's capacity to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Districts should have plans in place to communicate this message prior to the start and during the school year. This communication should share district policies on health requirements for exclusion from and return to school. For guidance in this area, see Appendix B.

Human Resources, Finance, and Administration
1. **Class Coverage due to Staff Absences-** Districts and schools should have clearly defined plans for how to address any staffing shortages on a day-to-day basis resulting from an insufficient number of available substitute teachers. This plan should not necessitate "sprinkling" students to different classrooms if doing so would put a classroom out of compliance with existing regulations for room capacity and social distancing. If funding and staffing resources are available, districts could help schools prepare for this possibility by assigning a full-time, permanent substitute teacher to each school. In the event that a school has an insufficient number of substitutes, administration should seek to protect teacher planning and collaborative times by utilizing all available staff to ensure class coverage.

2. **Reporting Protocol-** Districts should develop a clear protocol of responsibilities for reporting positive cases of COVID-19 (one or more) in schools to the district office, the SCDE, and the local health department. Districts and schools should also provide information about testing for COVID-19 to individuals that demonstrate symptoms. As noted in DHEC's Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Schools (Appendix E), testing of students and staff that develop COVID symptoms is important for assisting the response of public health authorities.

Facilities, Transportation, and Operations (including food services)
In the event that all or some students can report to school for in-person instruction, the following recommendations should be considered:

1. **Building Considerations-** To comply with health regulations, districts should consider implementation of alterations to ordinary operations and facilities usage, including, but not limited to:

   a. Exterior and interior signage communicating how to stop the spread and describing symptoms of COVID-19, good hygiene, and school/district specific protocols. Signage should give clear simple instructions for any actions required by the reader, including reminders not to enter the school if experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or illness.
   b. Increasing areas where students are received to reduce bottlenecks.

c. Stagger entry and release times to reduce crowd movement. This may require extending the school day.
d. Turn off water fountains and provide bottled water or allow students and staff to bring water bottles from home.
e. Mark spaced lines and traffic directions in hallways to designate flow paths.
f. Increase spaces between desks and have them facing the same direction maintaining six feet of distance to the extent possible.
g. Mark social distancing spaces on floors in areas where lines form such as cafeterias or restrooms.
h. Spaced seating in the cafeteria and longer meal periods if other options such as pre-packaged meals served in classrooms are not feasible.

2. **Transportation-** *Under current DHEC guidance in our state, buses should not be filled beyond 50 percent capacity, where practical.* In addition, districts should implement health and safety protocols such as:

    a. Establishing protocols to promote social distancing of students from different families at bus stops, during loading, during transport, and while unloading the bus.
    b. Providing hand sanitizer for students and drivers.
    c. Providing face masks for drivers, and allowing for masks and face coverings for students.
    d. Cleaning and disinfection of high touch areas at least once per day.
    e. Recommendations contained in the CDC Guidance for Bus Transit Operators.

    For guidance on bus operations, see Appendix F.

3. **Student Arrival and Dismissal-** The start of the school day presents unique challenges to ensuring social distancing and compliance with health requirements. As a result, districts should carefully review school arrival procedures and enact policies such as:

    a. Providing hand sanitizer for students and staff;
    b. Establishing a staggered schedule for student drop off;
    c. Minimizing or eliminating student congregation in common areas prior to the start of instruction; and
    d. Discouraging and preventing students from congregating in parking lots.

4. **Student and Staff Health Protocols-** Schools should have clearly established health protocols for student and staff attendance in a school building. These protocols should be clearly communicated in advance of the start of school to students, families, and staff. State statute gives public school districts the authority to exclude students who have a contagious disease such as COVID-19 or are liable to transmit it after exposure. In addition, the local health department has the authority to exclude students from school and may order students and others to isolate or quarantine. (S.C. Code of Regulations R. 61-20) As such, districts/schools are encouraged to work closely with their local health departments. **For guidance on developing steps for screening and**

related health protocols, see Appendix B. For guidance on how to respond to suspected cases of COVID-19 for students or staff, see Appendix E. Districts should also remain informed of the latest guidance from DHEC and/or the CDC regarding symptoms of COVID-19 and recommended health protocols for exclusions of students or staff from a school building due to factors related to COVID-19.

5. **COVID-19 Case on Campus**- Districts should establish predetermined thresholds for mitigation strategies for the event of a reported case of COVID-19 on campus by following DHEC's recommendation in conjunction with CDC guidance. This protocol should establish clear steps for responding to positive cases (either student or staff) on campus. For additional guidance in this area, see the CDC's Mitigation Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission. In developing protocols, districts should consult the interim guidance from DHEC contained in Appendix E.

6. **Meal Service-** Districts should develop plans for student meals for any scheduling model under consideration (see the end of this Phase for more detail on scheduling models). Depending on the scheduling model, these plans should consider the following:

   a. **Full Distance Learning (no one in the building)**
      i. Provide PPE and establish social distancing protocols to ensure the safety of any staff involved in the preparation of meals or in the delivery or pick-up of meals;
      ii. Develop capacity to provide a week's worth of meals at a time to students, either at a designated date and time for pick-up or delivery; and
      iii. Evaluate how meal distribution can working in conjunction with distribution of instructional resources and district communications.

   b. **Hybrid or "Traditional" Models**
      i. Provide hand sanitizer for all students and staff;
      ii. Position hand sanitizer near operational vending machines and clean vending machines regularly;
      iii. Provide PPE for all food service staff;
      iv. Conduct cleaning of cafeterias and high-touch areas throughout the day;
      v. Consider alternative meal serving models that enhance capacity for social distancing, such as staggered lunch periods or service of meals in classrooms;
      vi. In the event of an A/B schedule where students do not report to campus each day, develop a plan to provide to-go meals for students to cover needs prior to next day on campus;
      vii. Eliminate serving procedures similar to "family style meals" or prohibit food sharing;
      viii. To the extent possible, seek to provide meals that are bagged or boxed with all necessary utensils, condiments, etc. to minimize handling of meals;
      ix. Eliminate self-serve food items;

x. Install sneeze guards or similar measures in serving lines;
xi. Develop plans to serve students that are medically fragile or at heightened medical risk separately from other students;
xii. Limit cash transactions, and if they must occur, ensure that staff that are managing registers are not also handling food; and
xiii. Allow students and staff to wear face masks in halls and large gathering areas.

7. **Face Masks and PPE for Students-** Districts should review dress code and other relevant policies to ensure students and staff can wear cloth face masks and other PPE. Recommendations for the use of masks and other PPE should be determined by districts in accordance with the latest guidance from DHEC and/or the CDC. The latest DHEC guidance is attached to this report as Appendix B, but districts should review the most recent guidance released closer to the start of school. Some students may be required to wear additional PPE (i.e. health-related, special conditions, etc.) when directed to do so by a health care provider. In this event, it may be necessary for schools to provide masks for those students, and additional accommodations may need to be developed for students based on their health needs.

8. **Face Masks and PPE for Staff-** Recommendations for the use of masks and other PPE should be determined by districts in accordance with the latest guidance from DHEC and the CDC. The SCDE has purchased cloth face masks for all teachers for the coming school year. Some staff may be required to wear additional PPE due to health- related concerns while others may be directed to do so by district or school policy for certain job duties (i.e.-custodial staff, specialized positions, etc.) In the event additional PPE is required for job duties, it may be necessary for schools to provide the required PPE.

9. **Nurses Stations and Clinical Spaces-** Students that do not display symptoms of COVID-19 should continue to be seen and treated according to standard school protocols in the nurse's room/clinic. However, students or staff that are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 should ***not*** be treated in the same space used for all other non-COVID-19 medical conditions. As a result, schools should develop a separate room where students or staff that are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 can be evaluated and/or wait for pick-up. Guidance on treatment of suspected cases of COVID-19 on campus can be found in the DHEC interim guidance contained in Appendix E. This room should adhere to guidelines including:

   a. All individuals in the room should wear, at minimum, a cloth face covering;
   b. Equipment for the room should include (at minimum) touch-free thermometers, hand sanitizer, hand soap, and tissues;
   c. PPE should be available for staff that are engaged in the evaluation and care of individuals displaying symptoms of COVID-19;
   d. Access to the room should be restricted to only those staff essential for response to an individual displaying symptoms of COVID-19;
   e. Strict social distancing guidelines will be maintained;

f. Records should be maintained of all persons who entered the clinical space for COVID-19;

g. This clinical space should be disinfected several times daily;

h. At the earliest time that is safe, staff displaying symptoms of COVID-19 should go home and students should be walked out to their parents for pick-up; and

i. Anyone that displays symptoms of COVID-19 should be encouraged to seek medical attention and evaluation.

10. **Playgrounds and Recess-** Districts should evaluate recess procedures to maximize social distancing and reduce touching of shared surfaces. These procedures could include alternate recess schedules to reduce the number of students on the playground at one time, providing for time to disinfect equipment between uses, or, if disinfection is not possible, restricting use of playground equipment.

11. **Cleaning Protocols-** Districts and schools should implement protocols for daily routine cleaning of school facilities consistent with the most recent guidance from DHEC and/or the CDC. Priority areas for cleaning should include classrooms, large group gathering areas, restrooms, hallways, and high-touch surfaces.

12. **Staff Meetings-** Districts and schools should evaluate policies on staff meetings, especially those that require large groups that make social distancing difficult. Whenever possible, schools should seek to leverage video conferencing or other resources to reduce the need for groups to gather.

13. **Staff Work Space-** Districts and schools should evaluate shared teacher workspaces to ensure adequate social distancing. Consideration should also be given to limit capacity for staff common areas to provide for social distancing.

Instruction and Student Support Services

1. **Extending Learning-** Some of the federal recovery dollars for COVID-19 or federal funds that have been allowed to be carried forward from the 2019–2020 school year could be purposed for extending learning activities for students throughout the 2020–21 school year. Specifically, districts may use these funds to pay for staffing and resources to deliver interventions for students in reading and math throughout the year. Districts should prioritize these activities to meet the needs of learners from populations of focus, including, but not limited to: literacy for students in grades 1–3, students with demonstrated learning loss or limited engagement during the spring 2020 school closure period, English learners, migrant or homeless students, and students with IEPs. To employ extended learning opportunities for these students, districts could consider activities such as:

    a. **Extended School Day-** Districts could extend the ordinary school day to provide for enrichment and remediation opportunities for all students. This extended school day may also be necessary to allow for increased transition periods required by health guidelines.

b. **Before and After School Programs-** Instead of extending the school day for all students, districts could also provide before or after school learning opportunities to targeted groups of students.

c. **"Double blocking"-** At the elementary level, districts could hire additional, temporary staff to provide a double block of reading or math for students during the day.

d. **Saturday Learning-** Districts could provide enrichment programs for students in all grade levels in literacy and math on Saturday.

e. **"Looping"-** While it would not necessarily require use of federal funds, "looping" of students to work with the same teacher as last school year could be a powerful strategy for supporting student learning, especially at the elementary level. Districts should consider this possibility based on available staffing and staff training and expertise. When using looping for the first time, districts should ensure teachers have sufficient advance notice of their schedule as well as planning and collaboration time to prepare instructional materials for a new grade level.

2. **Grading Practices-** Students will be entering the 2020–21 school year after experiencing disruption to one quarter of the prior school year. As a result, districts should re-evaluate grading policies in order to utilize policies that are best aligned to promote student remediation, growth, and mastery of essential content and skills. Priority in grading policies should be placed on utilization of practices that do not simply seek to "quantify" learning; instead, they seek to promote and drive learning. To reach this goal, districts could consider policies such as:

   a. **Increased reliance on formative assessment tools-** While heavy reliance on formative assessment tools may result in fewer "grades in the gradebook," districts should seek to use assessment tools that provide students meaningful and quick feedback that is part of a learning progression rather than only utilizing final, summative assessments.

   b. **Greater use of mastery learning-** Given last year's disruption to schooling, students may enter the fall semester with learning gaps. As a result, districts should seek to incorporate mastery learning practices that allow students opportunities for remediation, growth, and recovery.

   c. **Provision for student choice-** Early incorporation of increased student choice in assessment formats will help districts have greater flexibility in the event of a temporary shift to distance learning due to health conditions.

   d. **Greater reliance on authentic assessment practices-** High priority should be placed on grading and assessment practices that provide students with authentic opportunities to demonstrate mastery of content and skills. These approaches

could include practices such as project-based learning, portfolio-based assessments, or student-led conferences.

    e. **Standards-based grading-** When possible, schools should seek to incorporate standards-based grading practices in place of traditional "unit" approaches to instruction. Doing so will provide students with more opportunities to demonstrate growth and mastery of essential standards and skills over the full course of the school year.

    f. **Elimination of term-weighting-** Heavy reliance on term-weighting of grades could result in significant challenges for students that enter the first grading period of the school year with the largest learning gaps. A shift to a cumulative grading practice (similar to the combination of Q3 and Q4 during the second semester of 2019–2020) will decrease the chances of a student being unable to "catch up" from lower performance during the first grading period.

3. **Ensuring a Well-Rounded Education-** As our state learned during the spring 2020 closures, certain courses and content face unique challenges for delivery via distance learning. These same courses are likely to be the ones that face the greatest instructional challenges due to new health and safety requirements like social distancing or wearing of masks. ***However, in spite of those challenges, it is unanimously the recommendation of this task force that districts continue to ensure students have access to a well-rounded education in both in-person and distance learning environments this fall.*** These courses are an essential component of the world-class education identified in the *Profile of the SC Graduate*, and access to a well-rounded education has documented benefits for the social and emotional wellness of students through promotion of attributes like hope and engagement. In determining how to ensure student access, districts should refer to the guidance provided by the relevant state and national professional organizations. Specifically, students in South Carolina should have continued opportunities to participate in or access:

    a. **The Arts (visual and performing)-** In order to ensure student access to the arts, districts should consider the following:

        i. Instruction in the arts focuses on core standards of creation, connection, presentation/performance, and response. While new health and safety protocols in schools may present challenges for instruction focused on the domain of presentation/performance, arts teachers have the capacity to shift instructional focus to the other domains in ways that are consistent with health requirements.

        ii. Districts should seek to partner with the SCDE and state and local arts organizations to enhance student access to the arts. For example, while new school guidelines prohibiting use of shared materials could complicate efforts for scene shop construction in a theater class, students could partner with a local arts organization that might be able to translate

student design into finished product. Arts organizations like the SC Arts Alliance and the Arts in the Basic Curriculum Project are strong examples of partners that can assist with the development of a depository of instructional resources and materials for teacher use within health guidelines. These organizations can also be important providers of professional learning opportunities in districts that lack staffing capacity for district-led opportunities for teachers in the arts.

      iii.   Districts should look to state and national arts organizations for guidance on how to safely ensure student access to the arts for in-person instruction and meaningful access for distance learning. For a list of organizations and existing resources, see Appendices G.

    b. **Physical Education (including ROTC)-** In determining how to best ensure ongoing student access to physical education, ROTC, and dance, districts should consult the guidance developed by the SCDE in Appendix H. Districts should also be ready to consult resources and guidance being developed by the South Carolina Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (SCAHPERD).

    c. **Media Centers and Media Specialists-** In determining how to best ensure ongoing student access to media centers and instruction from media specialists, districts should consult the guidance developed by the South Carolina Association of School Librarians in Appendix I

    d. **Career and Technical Education (CATE)-** In determining how to ensure student access to CATE coursework and resources, districts should consult the guidance developed by the South Carolina Career and Technical Education Association and the Office of Career and Technical Education in Appendix J.

In order to best implement the recommendations from state and national professional organizations, districts may find it useful to:

1. Evaluate existing resources and equipment and then purchase additional necessary resources through federal or state recovery funds in order to ensure instruction can comply with existing health guidance and requirements. For example, districts could consider purchasing and providing "art kits" for elementary students to reduce sharing of art materials.

2. Develop greater opportunities for cross-curricular and interdisciplinary planning and instruction by teachers. For example, art and music can incorporate and enhance instruction in math, science, social studies, and English language arts.

Scheduling Models for Reopening
Scheduling for the 2020–21 school year poses unique challenges that have never before been faced in our schools. Schools are faced with the task of building schedules that are aligned to best practice and research on student learning while also adhering to new health and safety protocols implemented due to COVID-19. This task is further complicated by the impossibility of projecting with certainty the health conditions in August 2020, as well as the possibility of a resurgence of the virus in the fall. As a result of these factors, this section provides three potential scheduling models for districts to consider.

The determination of which scheduling option to choose is best made by a district based on local conditions, including local health conditions, and available staffing and resources. In making scheduling decisions, districts should be **guided by the following three principles**:

1. *While scheduling should always seek to provide students with the best possible learning experiences, greatest priority must be given to ensuring the health, safety, and wellness of students and staff. This requires aligning all scheduling decisions with the latest recommendation and guidance from public health officials about best practices for preventing the spread of COVID-19.*

2. *Districts should avoid any scheduling scenario where the burden falls on a classroom teacher to simultaneously create and implement traditional and distance instruction for students during the same day.*

3. *While the optimal learning environment for most students would be in-person instruction, districts and schools should have plans in place to adjust scheduling models during the school year in the event of a decline or second wave of COVID-19 in their area. It must be acknowledged that the scheduling model that works in August may not be the model that works best throughout the year.*

In addition to these guiding principles, districts should carefully weigh the most up-to-date guidance from public health agencies like the CDC and DHEC. Schools are encouraged to review the CDC's Decision Tree, the CDC Considerations for Schools, the CDC FAQ's for Administrators, and the CDC's Community Mitigation Strategies in order to determine their preparedness for reopening. With these recommendations in mind, three possible scheduling models are proposed for districts. For each model, recommendations and questions to be considered are offered to guide districts in selection and implementation of the appropriate model.

Model 1: "Traditional" Scheduling
In this scenario, health guidelines and facility considerations allow for all students and staff to return to a school building to open the school year and during the school calendar *due to low or no spread of COVID-19 in the area and low to no positive cases within the school building*. From a learning perspective, this should be a district's ideal scheduling scenario for the fall, but this option can only be selected if it is possible to do so based on guidelines provided by public health authorities (DHEC and CDC) and available facilities and staffing. Even in the event that schools can return in a "traditional" fashion in August, districts should still seek to make

modifications to their scheduling and instructional practices to mitigate continued risks related to COVID-19. These modifications should include:

1. **Communications-** Districts should engage in early, clear, and consistent communications to students, families, and the community about changes in standard school operations necessitated by COVID-19. This communication should include direct instruction to all students on the first day of school concerning new protocols and expectations.

2. **Class Size Caps-** Any class size cap established by health authorities should ***not*** be exceeded in building school schedules. Exceptions that have been used in the past to justify exceeding existing class caps in a building's master schedule are not sufficient grounds for exceeding guidelines based on health considerations. In order to facilitate these efforts, schools should seek to utilize the following measures (these also apply to classes that meet in-person for Model 2: Hybrid):

    a. Schools should remove any student desks and seating beyond what is needed to accommodate the maximum number of students assigned to a room.
    b. Teachers should limit or eliminate use of partner or group activities that require close physical proximity of students. Teachers should instead seek to create the collaborative learning benefits of partner and group work through tools like Socratic Seminars with appropriate physical spacing or collaboration through online documents and platforms.
    c. Schools should increase utilization of large spaces throughout the entire school day. These spaces include atriums, auditoriums, cafeterias, gyms, and- when weather permits- outside spaces.
    d. Master schedules must continue to prioritize inclusion of students with IEPs. In efforts to design smaller classes, districts should make every effort to ensure that students with IEPs are not isolated from their peers that do not have IEPs.

3. **Reduction of Transitions-** To the greatest extent possible, districts and schools should seek to minimize student transitions during the day. Doing so may require alterations to the traditional instructional schedule, which could include:

    a. Staggered class dismissal to prevent all students in the hallways simultaneously;
    b. Redesigning student arrival in the morning to prevent congregations of large groups. This may include a necessity for students to report directly to classrooms rather than meeting in common spaces;
    c. Scheduling restroom breaks;
    d. If possible, schools should consider scheduling "cohorts" of students with common courses so teachers, rather than students, rotate between classes;
    e. As long as health guidelines recommend maintaining distance between individuals, schools should seek to minimize or eliminate large group gatherings such as assemblies, pep rallies, spirit nights, or other similar activities; and

f. In addition to focusing on transitions *within* a school, districts should seek to minimize student transitions *beyond* the school during the instructional day. This will require a careful review of field studies and other activities requiring student travel. This includes developing procedures to allow high school students opportunities to safely engage in career center opportunities if available. Whenever possible, schools should seek to use virtual activities and experiences to reduce the necessity for students to travel off campus during the school day. Schools should also make sure to provide an equal level of access to off-campus opportunities for curricular activities as is provided for co-curricular activities.

4. **Modified School Day (High School)-** When possible, high schools should seek to provide upperclassmen with late arrival or early dismissal in place of study hall periods. Schools should still place priority on building full student schedules for students that do not have the 24 credits required to graduate and for students requiring additional course work to achieve CTE completer status. However, for students that have met these requirements, schools should seek to either provide late arrival or early dismissal when possible. For students desiring to take courses beyond the 24 credits required for graduation, schools should consider VirtualSC when it provides a desired course. However, this recommendation should not be construed as a reason to reduce student access to taking multiple years and credits of an academic program such as performing arts, CTE, etc.

5. **Planning for Potential Self-Isolation Periods**- Based on current health guidance, the possibility exists in the fall that significant numbers of staff or students could be required to complete a period of self-isolation or quarantine due to potential exposure to COVID-19 without contracting the illness. As a result, districts must plan for how instruction will be conducted for students and by staff that are required to self-isolate without being ill. This could include ensuring that teachers have the resources to conduct distance learning from home and students can access instructional materials and resources from home. Guidance on the length of periods of self-isolation or quarantine can be found in the DHEC interim guidance in Appendix E.

Model 2: Hybrid Scheduling
This situation is most likely to be experienced during a period of ***medium spread of COVID-19 in the area and a medium number of positive cases within the school building.*** In this scenario, only a portion of staff and students can report to a physical school building due to a combination of health requirements and facility/space limitations. As a result, some students will be able to report to school while others will have to engage in distance learning. In this situation, districts should place the highest priority on ensuring in-person instruction for the following groups while complying with prevailing health and safety requirements:

1. Pre-K and Elementary;
2. Students with IEPs, especially those with occupational and other physical therapy needs;
3. English learners; and/or
4. High school students in CTE programs that require hands-on experiences or access to specialized equipment.

In order to maximize access to school facilities for these groups, districts may need to consider alternative placement of classes to comply with health guidelines (i.e.- elementary classes meeting on a high school campus). As a result, a district may consider an option where certain groups (example- elementary) report to a school building daily while other groups (middle and high) engage in distance learning.

District could also consider split-schedule models for all students such as:

1. **AM/PM Model-** Half of the student body attends class in the morning and then engages in distance learning in the afternoon while the other half of the student body engages in distance learning in the morning before attending in-class sessions in the afternoon.

2. **Alternating Days-** Cohorts of students attend school for the entire day for a portion of the week. For example, half of the students could attend school on Monday and Wednesday while the other half attend on Tuesday and Thursday. On Fridays, students engage in distance learning, teachers have opportunities for planning and grading, and districts can engage in deep cleaning of school buildings.

Before adopting any hybrid schedule, districts should consider the following questions:

1. *Does the district have a plan in place for how to provide clear, consistent, and advanced communications to students, families, and the communities to help them understand the hybrid scheduling model?*
2. *Does the district have sufficient transportation resources (buses and drivers) to execute a split-schedule?*
3. *Does the area have sufficient childcare options to support families that will be unable to have an adult at home for days/times of day where students are engaged in distance learning?*
4. *What is the educational impact of split scheduling on different student groups? For example, districts should consider the additional challenge presented to younger learners by inconsistent schedules and routines throughout the week. A split schedule could also pose unique challenges for student groups such as English learners or students on an IEP.*
5. *How can districts minimize the burden of split-scheduling on families with multiple children in school? For example, districts should consider ways to cluster and schedule students by last name or sibling indication in PowerSchool to ensure children in the same family attend school at the same time of day or on the same days each week, even if they attend different schools within the district. Districts could also consider allowing families to "register" for a specific schedule to ensure all children in the same family have the same schedule throughout the week.*
6. *How can districts support teachers in building relationships with students? Similar to the second point under the "full distance learning" model, districts must be mindful of the need to strategically facilitate the development of relationships with families and students in the event that a portion of students are unable to start the school year in a building.*

Model 3: Full Distance Learning
In this scenario, all students and staff are unable to return to a physical school building due to *high spread of COVID-19 in the area and high numbers of positive cases within the school building*. In this event, districts should rely on a full distance learning schedule until the health situation permits a return to in-person instruction for all or part of the students in a school. While this is similar in concept to what districts implemented in spring 2020, use of full distance learning in the 202–-21 school year should consider the following:

1. **Distance Learning Plan-** Districts using distance learning for students should have a clearly defined plan that is communicated to all stakeholders and includes what should be expected by and from students, teachers, and families. This plan should be responsive to lessons learned by the districts in the spring of 2020 and contain the same elements described in the "Distance Learning Contingency Plan" section earlier in this document.

2. **Building Relationships-** In the event of distance learning at the start of the year, districts must carefully consider ways to build relationships with students and families. This is a unique challenge compared to the spring 2020 distance learning experience where teachers already had established relationships with students and families. Ideas in this area could include scheduling digital "open house" events prior to the start of the school year or giving teachers dedicated and unencumbered work time to engage in outreach to their new students/families.

3. **Establishment of Advisory Groups-** Districts should consider assigning a "mentoring or advisory" group of students to all staff in a building. To be effective, these groups should be kept small (no more than 12 students). For schools with existing advisory sections in their schedule, all building staff should be included to reduce the size of existing advisory sections. As mentors, staff would be responsible for regularly communicating with and checking in on their assigned students, both in terms of academic progress and social and emotional wellbeing.

4. **Opportunities for Two-Way Communication-** In addition to providing regular and detailed communication to families, staff, and students, districts should provide regular opportunities for collecting feedback from families, staff, and students to identify areas of strength and concern regarding the distance-learning format.

5. **Reducing Transport of School Materials-** Districts should review instructional practices to determine steps that can be taken to minimize the amount of materials that are routinely being transported by students and staff between school and staff. While it is impossible to eliminate all transport of materials, finding ways to reduce transport should be emphasized and encouraged.

6. **Technology Assistance Hubs-** Districts should maintain physical locations with regular business hours where students and staff can have access to technology support. Districts should also consider ways to provide support for students and families without available transportation to these locations.

7. **Meeting the Needs of Special Populations-** In the event of full distance learning, districts should be especially mindful of meeting the needs of special populations of students such as:

   a. **Students with IEPs-** Consideration of how to best meet the needs of a child with an IEP through distance learning should be determined on a child-by-child basis by IEP teams. In some cases, these may necessitate the development of compensatory services for students with pronounced needs that can not be adequately addressed through a district's existing distance learning platform and procedures.

   b. **English learners-** In delivering distance learning for English learners, to the extent possible, districts should:

      i. Reduce the ratio of English for Speakers of Other Languages instructors to students;
      ii. Continue to provide instructional support aligned to the student's English language proficiency;
      iii. In the event a student's ELP has not been determined, the results of the provisional English language screening interview should be used to guide the level of support;
      iv. Provide both synchronous and asynchronous resources and instruction;
      v. Increase access to translators and/or software that assist with translation;
      vi. Continue use of a co-teaching model; and
      vii. Ensure that all materials are also accessible in a student's home language to facilitate family engagement.

In order to best support districts that require a full distance-learning model, the SCDE should consider the following:

1. **Waivers from Defined Minimum Program and Seat Time Requirements-** As noted in the AccelerateED summer recommendations, districts that are required to shift to a hybrid or full-time distance learning model will need the flexibility provided by waivers to defined minimum program and seat time requirements.

2. **Collaboration among districts that are engaged in full distance learning-** Support should include continued development of the resources at scremotelearning.com.

References

Chiefs for Change. (2020). *The Return: How Should Education Leaders Prepare for Reentry and Beyond*. *https://chiefsforchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CFC-TheReturn_5-13-20.pdf*.

Palmetto State Arts Education. (2018). *Creative, Engaged, & Ready for Tomorrow*. *https://www.palmettoartsed.org/gallup.html*

Page, S. (2020, May 26). Back to school? 1 in 5 teachers are unlikely to return to reopened classrooms this fall, poll says. *USA Today*. Retrieved from https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2020/05/26/coronavirus-schools-teachers-poll-ipsos-parents-fall-online/5254729002/.

Appendix A – NASP COVID-19 Parental Resource

Helping Children Cope With Changes Resulting From COVID-19

Families across the country are adapting to the evolving changes in daily life caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most schools, places of public gathering, and nonessential businesses are closed, and parents and other caregivers are faced with helping their families adjust to the new normal. This includes trying to keep children occupied, feeling safe, and attempting to keep up with schoolwork as best as possible. None of this easy, but it helps to stay focused on what is possible in order to reinforce a sense of control and to reassure children that they are okay, and that the situation will get better.

It is very important to remember that children look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events. Acknowledging some level of concern, without panicking, is appropriate and can result in taking the necessary actions that reduce the risk of illness. Teaching children positive preventive measures, talking with them about their fears, and giving them a sense of some control over their risk of infection can help reduce anxiety. This is also a tremendous opportunity for adults to model for children problem-solving, flexibility, and compassion as we all work through adjustmenting daily schedules, balancing work and other activities, getting creative about how we spend time, processing new information from authorities, and connecting and supporting friends and family members in new ways. The following tips can help.

STAY CALM, LISTEN, AND OFFER REASSURANCE

- **Be a role model.** Children will react to and follow your reactions. They learn from your example.
- **Be aware of how you talk about COVID-19.** Your discussion about COVID-19 can increase or decrease your child's fear. If true, remind your child that your family is healthy, and you are going to do everything within your power to keep loved ones safe and well. Carefully listen or have them draw or write out their thoughts and feelings and respond with truth and reassurance.
- **Explain social distancing.** Children probably don't fully understand why parents/guardians aren't allowing them to be with friends. Tell your child that your family is following the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which include social distancing. Social distancing means staying away from others until the risk of contracting COVID-19 is under control. Showing older children the "flatten the curve" charts will help them grasp the significance of social distancing. Explain that while we don't know how long it will take to "flatten the curve" to reduce the number of those infected, we do know that this is a critical time—we must follow the guidelines of health experts to do our part.
- **Demonstrate deep breathing.** Deep breathing is a valuable tool for calming the nervous system. Do breathing exercises with your children.
- **Focus on the positive.** Celebrate having more time to spend as a family. Make it as fun as possible. Do family projects. Organize belongings, create masterpieces. Sing, laugh, and go outside, if possible, to connect with nature and get needed exercise. Allow older children to connect with their friends virtually.

- **Establish and maintain a daily routine.** Keeping a regular schedule provides a sense of control, predictability, calm, and well-being. It also helps children and other family members respect others' need for quiet or uninterrupted time and when they can connect with friends virtually.
- **Identify projects that might help others.** This could include: writing letters to the neighbors or others who might be stuck at home alone or to healthcare workers; sending positive messages over social media; or reading a favorite children's book on a social media platform for younger children to hear.
- **Offer lots of love and affection.**

MONITOR TELEVISION VIEWING AND SOCIAL MEDIA
- Parents/guardians should monitor television, internet, and social media viewing—both for themselves and their children. Watching continual updates on COVID-19 may increase fear and anxiety. Developmentally inappropriate information, or information designed for adults, can also cause anxiety or confusion, particularly in young children.
- Dispel rumors and inaccurate information. Explain to your child that many stories about COVID-19 on the internet may include rumors and inaccurate information. Older children, in particular, may be accessing a great deal of information online and from friends that contains inaccuracies. Talk to your child about factual disease information.
- Provide alternatives. Engage your child in games or other exciting activities instead.

TAKE TIME TO TALK
- **Let your children's questions guide you.** Answer their questions truthfully, but don't offer unnecessary details or facts. Don't avoid giving them the information that experts indicate as crucial to your children's well-being. Often, children and youth do not talk about their concerns because they are confused or don't want to worry loved ones. Younger children absorb scary information in waves. They ask questions, listen, play, and then repeat the cycle. Children always feel empowered if they can control some aspects of their life. A sense of control reduces fear.

BE HONEST AND ACCURATE
- **Correct misinformation.** Children often imagine situations worse than reality; therefore, offering developmentally appropriate facts can reduce fears.
- **Explain simple safety steps.** Tell your child this disease spreads between people who are in close contact with one another, when an infected person coughs or sneezes, or when one touches infected objects or surfaces.
- **Stay up-to-date on the facts.** Go to https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html for additional factual information.

KEEP EXPLANATIONS AGE-APPROPRIATE
- **Early elementary school children.** Provide brief, simple information that balances COVID-19 facts with appropriate reassurances that adults are there to help keep them healthy and to take care of them if they do get sick. Give simple examples of the steps people make every day to stop germs and stay healthy, such as washing hands. Use language such as "adults are working hard to keep you safe."

- **Upper elementary and early middle school children.** This age group often is more vocal in asking questions about whether they indeed are safe and what will happen if COVID-19 spreads in their area. They may need assistance separating reality from rumor and fantasy. Discuss the efforts national, state, and community leaders are doing to prevent germs from spreading.
- **Upper middle and high school students.** Issues can be discussed in more depth. Refer them to appropriate sources of COVID-19 facts. Provide honest, accurate, and factual information about the current status of COVID-19. Engage them in decision-making about family plans, scheduling, and helping with chores at home.
- **For all children, encourage them to verbalize their thoughts and feelings. Be a good listener!**

STAY CONNECTED TO SCHOOL
- **Locate learning resources.** Schools' capacity to conduct virtual learning experiences will vary greatly, but most schools are providing lessons and learning activities for children to do. Take advantage of the many companies and online platforms currently offering free learning opportunities.
- **Identify additional resources.** Know if your school or district is providing additional resources, such meals, or technology, such as a laptop or tablet.
- **Stay in touch.** Find out how the school is communicating with families and students. Be sure to read any communications you receive. Check with you children, particularly older ones, as they may be receiving information directly that would be helpful for you to know.
- **Connect with school staff.** Reach out to your child's teacher and other relevant school staff if you have concerns about their coping and keeping up with assignments or activities.

KNOW THE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19
- According to the CDC, symptoms of fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath appear within 14 days after being exposed to the disease.
- For some people, the symptoms are similar to having a cold; for others, they are more severe or even life threatening.

MODEL BASIC HYGIENE AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLE PRACTICES
- **Practice daily good hygiene.** Encourage your child to practice these simple steps to prevent spreading the virus.
  - Wash your hands multiple times a day for 20 seconds. Signing "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" or "Happy Birthday" twice is about 20 seconds.
  - Compliment your children when they use a Kleenex or sneeze or cough into the bend of their elbow. Teach them the importance of throwing away used tissues immediately after sneezing or coughing.
  - Sadly, handshakes and hugs need to be limited to immediate family members, at least for now.
- **Foster a sense of control.** Offering guidance on what your child/children can do to prevent infection offers them a greater sense of control, which reduces anxiety.
- **Build the immune system.** Encourage your child to eat a balanced diet, get enough sleep, and exercise regularly; this will help them develop a robust immune system to fight off illness.

BE AWARE OF YOUR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Most children will manage well with the support of parents and other family members, even if showing signs of some anxiety or concerns, such as difficulty sleeping or concentrating. Some children, however, may have risk factors for more intense reactions, including severe anxiety, depression, and suicidal behaviors. Risk factors can include a pre-existing mental health problem, prior traumatic experiences or abuse, family instability, or the loss of a loved one. Parents and caregivers should contact a professional if children exhibit significant changes in behavior or any of the following symptoms for more than 2 weeks.

Preschoolers—thumb sucking, bedwetting, clinging to parents, sleep disturbances, loss of appetite, fear of the dark, regression in behavior, and withdrawal.

Elementary school children—irritability, aggressiveness, clinginess, nightmares, school avoidance, poor concentration, and withdrawal from activities and friends.

Adolescents—sleeping and eating disturbances, agitation, increase in conflicts, physical complaints, delinquent behavior, and poor concentration.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Coping With Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks, https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Coping-with-Stress-During-Infectious-Disease-Outbreaks/sma14-4885
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/children.html
- Handwashing and Hand Sanitizer Use at Home, at Play, and Out and About, https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/hand-sanitizer-factsheet.pdf
- NASP COVID-19 Resource Center, https://www.nasponline.org/COVID-19

For more information related to schools and physical and mental health, visit www.nasponline.org and www.nasn.org.

Adapted from, Talking to Children About COVID-19 (Coronavirus): A Parent Resource, National Association of School Psychologists and National Association of School Nurses, NASP, 2020.

Contributor: School Psychologist Kathy Sievering

Appendix B – DHEC School Operations COVID-19 Interim Guidance

Screening

- Screening testing of all incoming students and staff is not recommended because the tests available at this time cannot provide assurance that someone will not become sick after the test is performed.
    - The best available test, called a PCR, is a snapshot in time that only tells whether the individual is infected at that exact time. Antibody tests currently available have variable accuracy and positive results cannot guarantee protection from becoming infected again.
    - DHEC does recommend that individuals with even mild symptoms consistent with COVID-19 be tested for the disease.
- Educate students and their parents on the symptoms of COVID-19 and the importance of the student staying home if they have any of the symptoms or if anyone in the household tests positive for the disease.
    - Require sick students and staff to stay home as per the School and Child Care Exclusion List. Establish procedures for those who are sick at school to be sent home as soon as possible and kept separate from others until they can leave.
- Place signs such as this one on the exterior of entrances to the building to ask individuals entering to not enter if they have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Perform daily morning screenings by asking students if they have any symptoms of COVID-19. This could be done on an individual basis by asking each student as they enter their first classroom or on a group basis via morning announcements reminding students that they should alert their teacher if they feel sick.
    - Routine temperature screening of all persons entering the school is not recommended, except for in classrooms or schools dedicated to medically fragile students.
    - There is currently no method to screen daily for asymptomatic infected people, so proper social distancing must be performed.

Social Distancing Practices

- To the extent possible, maintain at least six feet of distance between each person.
    - If desks are used, increase the space between them. Rearrange them to maximize the space between students. Make desks face in the same direction (rather than facing each other).
- Stagger arrival and dismissal times.
- Avoid students congregating in common areas. For example, have students eat meals in their classrooms rather than mixing in the cafeteria or other common area.
    - If it is not possible to suspend use of common areas, try to limit the extent to which students mix with each other, and particularly with students from other classes.
    - Restrict hallway use through staggered release of classes.
- Limit people present to only students and essential faculty and staff.
- Avoid assemblies or other congregate events.

- Encourage frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
  - Ensure adequate supplies (e.g., soap, paper towels, hand sanitizer).
  - Put up posters in key locations (e.g., bathrooms) encouraging hand hygiene.
- Strongly encourage faculty and staff to wear masks or cloth face coverings as much as possible. Consideration may be given to recommending them for students. Cloth face coverings should not be used on children under two years old, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone unable to remove the face covering without assistance. The CDC has a pattern and a video available demonstrating how to make a cloth one.

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, classroom sink handles, countertops). Using an appropriate disinfectant, wipe down items (e.g., desks, chairs) and equipment before each use.
  - Clean with soap and water or a cleaner typically used. Use all cleaning products according to the directions on the label.
  - After cleaning, disinfect with a product that is EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 (a list of these is available here) or with diluted bleach solution (5 tablespoons, or 1/3 cup, bleach per gallon of water or 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water).
- For electronics such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards, and remote controls, remove visible contamination if present.
  - Consider use of wipeable covers for electronics.
  - Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products.
  - If no manufacturer guidance is available, consider the use of alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol to disinfect touch screens. Dry surfaces thoroughly to avoid pooling of liquids.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time).
- Ensure adequate supplies to support frequent cleaning and disinfection practices.
- The CDC provides additional information on Cleaning and Disinfecting a Facility, including guidance on appropriate personal protective equipment to wear while cleaning and disinfecting.
- Increase the ventilation (air exchange) rate and the percent outdoor air in ventilation.

References

- DHEC COVID-19 webpage: scdhec.gov/covid19
- CDC COVID-19 webpage: cdc.gov/covid19

This is consistent with guidance available as of May 18, 2020 and may be updated as new information on this novel virus and evolving situation become available.

Appendix C – Self-Assessment of MTSS (SAM) Implementation 2.0 Rubric

SAM 2.0 Rubric

The following was completed by the Florida Problem-Solving/Response to Intervention Project.

Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAM) Overview of MTSS

This instrument is used to measure school-level implementation of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). MTSS is a term used to describe an evidence-based model of educating students that uses data and problem-solving to integrate academic, behavior, and social-emotional instruction and intervention ***to maximize the success of all students***. Instruction and intervention is provided to students across multiple tiers of intensity based on need. Staff make data-based decisions in order for resources (e.g., time, staff, and evidence-based strategies) to reach the students at the appropriate levels to increase the performance of ALL students with the goal of achieving and/or exceeding proficiency.

Quality implementation of MTSS is associated with increased likelihood of instruction and interventions leading to successful student outcomes. Thus, it is important for schools to monitor not only student outcomes, but also *how* assessments, instruction, interventions, and data-based problem-solving are put into place (i.e., the fidelity with which these elements are implemented). Successful implementation is influenced by many factors within and around the school system (e.g., professional development, administrative support, data systems, staff member perceptions, successful adaptation, etc.). As a measure of school-level implementation of an MTSS, the focus of this instrument is on the necessary actions and activities to successfully implement and sustain the critical elements of MTSS with fidelity. The critical elements of MTSS referred to throughout the instrument include:
- Curriculum standards
- Assessments used to inform instruction
- Multiple tiers of instruction and intervention
- Data-based problem-solving used to make decisions

To promote a common understanding, staff that complete the instrument are urged to discuss the elements of MTSS and how they relate to components of their school's system for educating all students. MTSS should not be thought of as a *separate* initiative or program that must be implemented. Rather, MTSS provides a framework for the integration of academic, behavior, and social-emotional supports. Other initiatives such as implementation of educational policies and regulations, new assessment systems, or new instructional strategies also should be considered in the context of how they fit within an MTSS. MTSS provides a framework for implementing educational practices to ensure academic, behavioral, and social-emotional success of all students.

Directions for Completing the Instrument and Using the Data

The school leadership team that has responsibility for allocating resources to improve student learning should complete this instrument. Completion involves a three-step process:

1. Each team member should review the SAM instrument and Endnotes independently and think how s/he, personally, would respond to each item.

2. After reviewing the SAM items independently, the team members should come together to discuss their responses and reach agreement on which answer best represents the current status of implementation at their school. Endnotes provide additional clarifying information or definitions that the team should utilize, especially as team members are first becoming familiar with the SAM instrument. Endnotes provide critical information for ensuring the SAM instrument is completed accurately and results in valid scores. Record consensus scores on the SAM Scoring Sheet. The Scoring Sheet has abbreviated language and should only be used to record responses and to provide a visual representation of items with higher and lower scores.

3. Use the SAM instrument and the Scoring Sheet data to inform your action plan (an optional planning template is provided) to improve MTSS implementation.

Rate each item on a scale from 0-3 (*0 = Not Started; 1 = Emerging/Developing; 2 = Operationalizing; 3 = Optimizing*) using the definition provided for each rating.

Superscript numbers (e.g., [2]) correspond with endnotes that provide additional clarifying information or definitions relevant to the content within the item.

There are 39 items organized into six domains:

1) Leadership

Leadership is key to successful implementation of any large-scale innovation. The building principal, assistant principal(s), and school leadership team are critical to implementing MTSS at the school level. They engage staff in ongoing professional development for implementing MTSS, plan strategically for MTSS implementation, and model a data-based problem-solving process for school improvement. The school principal also supports the implementation of MTSS by communicating a vision and mission to school staff, providing resources for planning and implementing instruction and intervention, and ensuring that staff have the data needed for data-based problem-solving.

2) Building the Capacity/Infrastructure for Implementation

School-wide capacity and infrastructure are required in order to implement and sustain MTSS. This capacity and infrastructure usually includes ongoing professional development and coaching with an emphasis on data-based problem-solving and multi-tiered instruction and intervention; scheduling that allows staff to plan and implement instruction and intervention; and processes and procedures for engaging in data-based problem-solving.

3) Communication and Collaboration

Ongoing communication and collaboration are essential for successful implementation of MTSS. Many innovations fail due to a lack of consensus, to a lack of feedback to implementers to support continuous improvement, and to not involving stakeholders in planning. In addition to including stakeholders in planning and providing continuous feedback, it is also important to build the infrastructure to communicate and work with families and other community partners. These practices increase the likelihood that innovative practices will be implemented and sustained.

4) Data-Based Problem-Solving

The use of data-based problem-solving to make educational decisions is a critical element of MTSS implementation. This includes the use of data-based problem-solving for student outcomes across content areas, grade levels, and tiers, as well as the use of problem-solving to address barriers to school wide implementation of MTSS. While several models for data-based problem-solving exist, the four-step problem-solving approach evaluated in this instrument includes: 1) defining the goals and objectives to be attained, 2) identifying possible reasons why the desired goals are not being attained, 3) developing a plan for and implementing evidence-based strategies to attain the goals, and 4) evaluating the effectiveness of the plan.

5) Three-Tiered Instructional/Intervention Model

The three-tiered instructional/intervention model is another critical element of MTSS implementation. In a typical system, Tier 1 includes the instruction delivered to all students; Tier 2 includes supplemental instruction or intervention provided to students not meeting benchmarks; and Tier 3 includes intensive, small-group or individual interventions for students facing significant barriers to learning the skills required for school success. It is important to consider academic, behavior, and social-emotional instruction and interventions when examining this domain.

6) Data-Evaluation

Given the importance of data-based problem-solving within an MTSS model, the need for a data and evaluation system is clear. In order to do data-based problem-solving, school staff need to understand and have access to data sources that align with the purposes of assessment. Procedures and protocols for administering assessments and data use allow school staff to use student data to make educational decisions. In addition to student data, data on the fidelity of MTSS implementation allow school leadership to examine the current practices and make changes to increase implementation.

Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAM)					
Item	**0 = Not Implementing**	**1 = Emerging/Developing**	**2 = Operationalizing**	**3 = Optimizing**	**Rating**
1. Leadership Domain (Items 1–5)					
1. The principal is actively involved in and facilitates MTSS implementation	The principal does **_not_** actively support MTSS.	The principal communicates an urgent desire to implement MTSS, participates in professional development on MTSS, and is establishing an MTSS vision	**_and_** The principal actively supports the leadership team and staff to build capacity for implementation	**_and_** The Principal actively supports data-based problem-solving use at the school	
2. A leadership team is established that includes 6-8 members with cross-disciplinary representation (e.g., principal, general and special education teachers, content area experts, instructional support staff, student support personnel [1]) and is responsible for facilitating MTSS implementation [2]	**_No_** leadership team with explicit responsibility for leading MTSS implementation exists	A leadership team exists that includes cross-disciplinary representation,	**_and_** The leadership team has explicit expectations for facilitating MTSS implementation,	**_and_** The leadership team members have the beliefs, knowledge, and skills to lead implementation efforts	
3. The leadership team actively engages staff in ongoing professional development and coaching [3] necessary to support MTSS implementation	The leadership team does **_not_** have a needs-based plan to provide staff with professional development or coaching to support MTSS implementation	A needs assessment is conducted to gather information on beliefs, knowledge, and skills to develop a professional development plan to support MTSS implementation	**_and_** A professional development plan is created based on the needs assessment and used to engage staff in ongoing professional development and coaching	**_and_** Ongoing professional development activities are informed by data collected on the outcomes of professional development and coaching for continuous improvement	
4. A strategic plan for MTSS implementation is developed and aligned with the school improvement plan	**_No_** strategic plan for MTSS implementation exists	Leadership team is engaging district, family, and community partners to identify stakeholder needs, resources for, and barriers to MTSS implementation	**_and_** As part of the school improvement planning process a strategic plan is developed that specifies MTSS implementation [4]	**_and_** A strategic plan for MTSS implementation is updated as needed based on student outcome and implementation fidelity data as part of the school improvement planning process	

Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAM)

Item	0 = Not Implementing	1 = Emerging/Developing	2 = Operationalizing	3 = Optimizing	Rating
5. The leadership team is actively facilitating implementation of MTSS [5] as part of their school improvement planning process	The leadership team is **_not_** actively engaging in efforts to facilitate MTSS implementation	The leadership team engages in action planning and has created a strategic plan to facilitate implementation of the critical elements[6] of MTSS	**_and_** The leadership team provides support to educators implementing the critical elements of MTSS identified in the strategic plan	**_and_** The leadership team uses data on implementation fidelity of the critical elements of MTSS to engage in data-based problem-solving for the purpose of continuous school improvement	
2. Building the Capacity/Infrastructure for Implementation Domain (Items 6–16)					
6. The critical elements [6] of MTSS are defined and understood by school staff	**_No_** information on the critical elements of the school's MTSS is available	The critical elements of MTSS are being defined	**_and_** The critical elements of MTSS are defined and are communicated to school staff	**_and_** The curriculum, assessment, and instructional practices that define the school's critical elements of MTSS can be communicated by all school staff	

Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAM)					
Item	**0 = Not Implementing**	**1 = Emerging/Developing**	**2 = Operationalizing**	**3 = Optimizing**	**Rating**
7. The leadership team facilitates professional development and coaching [7] for all staff members on assessments and data sources used to inform decisions	Initial professional development is **_not_** provided to all staff members	The staff engages in initial, job-embedded professional development focusing on: • Purpose and administration of assessment tools • Role of assessment/data sources in making instructional decisions • Review of current assessments/data sources being utilized and those being considered • Analyzing and using assessment results to improve instruction • Using various types of data to inform instructional practices to meet the needs of diverse learners • Communicating and partnering with families about data and assessment practices	**_and_** The staff engages in ongoing professional development and coaching related to the administration of assessments and interpretation of the data/data sources. Professional development includes: • Changes or updates to assessments/data sources • Changes to data collection, tracking, and analysis • Ongoing coaching on instructional practices and interpreting assessment results	**_and_** The leadership team analyzes feedback from staff as well as outcomes in order to identify professional development and coaching needs in the area of assessment/data sources in support of continuous improvement	

Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAM)					
Item	**0 = Not Implementing**	**1 = Emerging/Developing**	**2 = Operationalizing**	**3 = Optimizing**	**Rating**
8. The leadership team facilitates professional development and coaching [7] for staff members on data-based problem-solving relative to their job roles/responsibilities	Professional development does **_not_** focus on data-based problem-solving	Initial professional development on data-based problem-solving is provided that includes the following elements: • Rationale for use of data-based problem-solving • Problem-solving steps to address school-wide, classroom, small-group, and individual student needs • Roles and responsibilities for team members engaging in data-based problem-solving	**_and_** Ongoing professional development and coaching on data-based problem-solving is delivered that includes the following elements: • Differentiation of professional development based on staff roles/responsibilities • Coaching • Modeling, practice, and collaborative feedback on problem-solving steps • Support for collaboration and teaming skills	**_and_** Data on use of problem-solving skills and application are used to inform continuous improvement of professional development and coaching efforts	
9. The leadership team facilitates professional development and coaching [7] for all staff on multi-tiered instruction and intervention relative to their job roles/responsibilities	**_No_** explicit connection to multi-tiered instruction and intervention is evident in professional development provided	Initial professional development on multi-tiered instruction and intervention is provided that includes the following elements: • Rationale for and modeling of instructional and intervention design and delivery (e.g., Common Core State Standards, instructional routine, Tier 1 Positive Behavior Supports, lesson planning for active student engagement) • Connections are made regarding how the practices are aligned with and integrated into MTSS • How data informs instruction and intervention design and delivery that reflects student diversity and results in learning opportunities for all students [8]	**_and_** Ongoing professional development and coaching on multi-tiered instruction and intervention is provided that includes the following elements: • Differentiation of professional development and coaching based on staff roles/responsibilities • Coaching • Modeling of, practice of, and collaborative feedback on, evidence-based practices	**_and_** The leadership team regularly uses data on student needs and fidelity of how evidence-based practices are implemented to continuously improve professional development and coaching efforts	

Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAM)					
Item	**0 = Not Implementing**	**1 = Emerging/Developing**	**2 = Operationalizing**	**3 = Optimizing**	**Rating**
10. Coaching [7] is used to support MTSS implementation	**_No_** coaching is provided to build staff capacity to implement the critical elements of MTSS	Initial coaching is occurring that is focused primarily on facilitating or modeling the components of MTSS	**_and_** Coaching activities are expanded to include: • Opportunities to practice • Collaborative and performance feedback	**_and_** Data on professional development, implementation fidelity, and student outcomes are used to refine coaching activities	
11. Schedules provide adequate time for trainings and coaching support	Schedules do **_not_** include time allocated to professional development and coaching for MTSS	Schedules include time allocated for trainings	**_and_** Schedules include time for ongoing coaching support	**_and_** Schedules permit personnel to access additional training and coaching support that is differentiated based on their needs	
12. Schedules provide adequate time to administer academic, behavior and social-emotional assessments needed to make data-based decisions	Schedules do **_not_** include time allocated to administering assessments needed to make decisions across tiers	Schedules include time for academic, behavior and social-emotional assessments administered to all students (e.g., universal screening)	**_and_** Schedules include time to administer more frequent progress monitoring assessments to students receiving Tier 2 and 3 services as specified (e.g., weekly or monthly assessments)	**_and_** Schedules permit personnel to administer additional assessment (e.g., diagnostic assessments) across content areas and tiers needed to engage in data-based problem-solving	

Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAM)					
Item	0 = Not Implementing	1 = Emerging/Developing	2 = Operationalizing	3 = Optimizing	Rating
13. Schedules provide adequate time for multiple tiers of evidence-based instruction and intervention to occur	The master schedule is developed **_without_** student data and does **_not_** include time for multi-tiered interventions	The master schedule is developed utilizing student data and includes time for multi-tiered interventions	**_and_** The master schedule facilitates effective implementation of multi-tiered interventions matched to student needs by content area and intensity (Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3)	**_and_** The master schedule allows for flexible student groupings	
14. Schedules provide adequate time for staff to engage in collaborative, data-based problem-solving and decision-making	The master schedule does **_not_** provide opportunities for collaborative, data-based problem-solving and decision-making to occur	The master schedule provides opportunities to engage in collaborative, data-based problem-solving and decision-making to occur	**_and_** The master schedule provides sufficient time for the process to occur with fidelity	**_and_** The master schedule provides opportunities for collaborative, data-based problem-solving and decision-making to occur in settings such as: • Leadership team meetings • Grade-level meetings • Cross grade-level meetings • Cross-departmental meetings • Professional Learning Community meetings	
15. Processes, procedures, and decision-rules [9] are established for data-based problem-solving	**_No_** systematic processes, procedures, or decision-rules are established	Processes, procedures, and decision-rules needed to engage in data-based problem-solving are developed and existing structures and resources are incorporated	**_and_** The steps of problem-solving; procedures for accessing, submitting, and using data; and decision-rules needed to make reliable decisions are communicated to staff [10]	**_and_** Data-based problem-solving processes, procedures, and decision-rules are refined based on data and feedback from staff, schedule changes, and resource availability	

Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAM)					
Item	**0 = Not Implementing**	**1 = Emerging/Developing**	**2 = Operationalizing**	**3 = Optimizing**	**Rating**
16. Resources [11] available to support MTSS implementation are identified and allocated	**_No_** process exists for mapping and allocating resources available to support MTSS implementation	Leadership team members are gathering information on the personnel, funding, materials, and other resources available to support MTSS implementation	**_and_** Resource inventories are established using the gathered information on the personnel, funding, materials, and other resources available to support MTSS implementation and plans for allocating the resources are established	**_and_** Existing resource maps and resource allocations are updated at least annually based on student need, available personnel, funding, materials, and other resources	
3. Communication and Collaboration Domain (Items 17–20)					
17. Staff [12] have consensus and engage in MTSS Implementation [13]	Staff are **_not_** provided opportunities to gain understanding of the need for MTSS	Staff are provided opportunities to gain understanding of the need for MTSS	**_and_** Staff has opportunities to gain understanding of its relevance to their roles and responsibilities	**_and_** Staff has opportunities to provide input on how to implement MTSS	
18. Staff are provided data on MTSS implementation fidelity and student outcomes [14]	Staff are **_not_** provided any data regarding MTSS implementation fidelity **_nor_** student outcomes	Staff are rarely (**_1x/year_**) provided data regarding MTSS implementation fidelity **_and_** student outcomes	Staff are regularly (**_2x/year_**) provided data regarding MTSS implementation fidelity **_and_** student outcomes	Staff are frequently (**_3x+/year_**) provided data regarding MTSS implementation fidelity **_and_** student outcomes	

Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAM)

Item	0 = Not Implementing	1 = Emerging/Developing	2 = Operationalizing	3 = Optimizing	Rating
19. The infrastructure exists to support the school's goals for family and community engagement [15] in MTSS	Family and community engagement is: *not* defined and monitored with data; *not* linked to school goals in SIP/MTSS plan; *and* procedures for facilitating 2-way communication do *not* exist	Family and community engagement are *1 of the following 3*: • defined and monitored with data • linked to school goals in SIP/MTSS plan • supported by procedures for facilitating 2-way communication	Family and community engagement are *2 of the following 3*: • defined and monitored with data • linked to school goals in SIP/MTSS plan • supported by procedures for facilitating 2-way communication exists	Family and community engagement are *all of the following*: • defined and monitored with data • linked to school goals in SIP/MTSS plan • supported by procedures for facilitating 2-way communication exist	
20. Educators actively engage families in MTSS	Staff do *none of the following*: • actively engage families that represent the diverse population of the school • engage families in problem-solving when their children need additional supports • provide intensive outreach to unresponsive families [16] • increase the skills of families to support their children's education	Staff do *1 of the following 4*: • actively engage families that represent the diverse population of the school • engage families in problem-solving when their children need additional supports • provide intensive outreach to unresponsive families • increase the skills of families to support their children's education	Staff do *2 or 3 of the following 4*: • actively engage families that represent the diverse population of the school • engage families in problem-solving when their children need additional supports • provide intensive outreach to unresponsive families • increase the skills of families to support their children's education	Staff do *all of the following*: • actively engage families that represent the diverse population of the school • engage families in problem-solving when their children need additional supports • provide intensive outreach to unresponsive families • increase the skills of families to support their children's education	
4. Data-based Problem-solving Domain (Items 21–27)					
21. Integrated data-based problem-solving [17] for student academic, behavior and social-emotional outcomes occurs across content areas, grade levels, and tiers [18]	Data on academic, behavior, and social-emotional outcomes may be collected, *but* data-based problem-solving does *not occur across*:	Data-based problem-solving occurs across *1 of the following 4*: • at least 2 content areas (e.g., reading, behavior, social-emotional) • at least 50% of grade levels	Data-based problem-solving occurs across *2 of the following 3*: • at least 3 content areas • at least 75% of grade levels • at least two tiers	Data-based problem-solving occurs across *all of the following*: • across all content areas • all grade levels • all tiers	

		Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAM)			
Item	**0 = Not Implementing**	**1 = Emerging/Developing**	**2 = Operationalizing**	**3 = Optimizing**	**Rating**
	• academic, behavior and social-emotional content areas • any grade levels • any tier	• a single tier • only academic outcomes or only behavior and social-emotional outcomes			
22. _Across all tiers_, data are used to identify the difference or "gap" between expected and current student outcomes relative to academic, behavior and social- emotional goals	The gap between expected and current student outcomes is **_not_** identified	The gap between expected and current outcomes is identified,	**_and_** The gap between expected and current outcomes is identified, and is associated with academic, behavior and social-emotional goals	**_and_** The gap between expected and current outcomes is identified relative to academic, behavior and social-emotional goals and is used to identify the appropriate level (tier) of instruction/intervention	
23. Academic, behavior and social- emotional data are used to identify and verify reasons why [19] students are not meeting expectations	Reasons why students are **_not_** meeting expectations are **_not_** identified	Reasons why students are not meeting expectations are identified	**_and_** Data are used to verify the reasons why students are not meeting expectations	**_and_** The reasons why students are not meeting expectations span multiple reasons related to instruction and the learning environment of why students struggle and are verified using a range of assessment methods	
24. Specific instructional/intervention plans are developed and implemented based on verified reasons why students are not meeting academic, behavior and social-emotional expectations	Instructional/ intervention plans are **_not_** developed	Instructional/intervention plans are developed	**_and_** Instruction/Intervention plans consistently specify what will be done, by who, when it will occur, and where with enough detail to be implemented [20]	**_and_** Instructional/intervention plans consistently are developed based on verified reasons students are not meeting expectations	

Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAM)					
Item	0 = Not Implementing	1 = Emerging/Developing	2 = Operationalizing	3 = Optimizing	Rating
25. Student progress specific to academic, behavior and social-emotional goals specified in intervention plans are monitored	Progress monitoring does **_not_** occur and student progress is **_not_** evaluated	Plans for monitoring progress toward expected student outcomes are developed	**_and_** In most cases data are collected to monitor student progress and intervention fidelity	**_and_** Changes are made to instruction/intervention based on student responses	
26. Data-based problem-solving informs how patterns of student performance across diverse groups (e.g., racial/ethnic, cultural, social-economic, language proficiency, disability status) are addressed	Patterns of student performance across diverse groups are **_not_** identified	Data on student outcomes are collected	**_and_** Patterns of student performance across diverse groups are identified	**_and_** Data on student outcomes informs how MTSS implementation efforts are impacting different groups of students	

Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAM)					
Item	**0 = Not Implementing**	**1 = Emerging/Developing**	**2 = Operationalizing**	**3 = Optimizing**	**Rating**
27. Resources for and barriers [21] to the implementation of MTSS are addressed through a data-based problem-solving process	Data-based problem-solving of resources for and barriers to implementation of MTSS does **_not_** occur	School leadership discusses resources for and barriers to implementation of MTSS	School leadership discusses resources for and barriers to implementation of MTSS **_and_** does **_one of the following_**: • collects data to assess implementation levels • develops action plans to increase implementation	School leadership discusses resources for and barriers to implementation of MTSS **_and_** does **_both of the following_**: • collects data to assess implementation levels • develops action plans to increase implementation	
5. Three Tiered Instructional /Intervention Model Domain (Items 28–33) (Items in this section alternate between addressing academic, behavior and social-emotional practices.)					
28. Tier 1 (core) academic practices exist that clearly identify learning standards [22], school-wide expectations [23] for instruction that engages students, and school-wide assessments [24]	Tier 1 elements are **_not_** developed and/or clearly defined	Tier 1 elements incorporate **_1 of the following 4_**: • clearly defined learning standards • school-wide expectations for instruction and engagement • link to behavior and social-emotional content/instruction • assessments/data sources	Tier 1 elements incorporate **_2 or 3 of the following 4_**: • clearly defined learning standards • school-wide expectations for instruction and engagement • link to behavior and social-emotional content/instruction • assessments/data sources	Tier 1 elements incorporate **_all of the following_**: • clearly defined learning standards • school-wide expectations for instruction and engagement • link to behavior and social-emotional content/instruction • assessments/data sources	

Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAM)					
Item	**0 = Not Implementing**	**1 = Emerging/Developing**	**2 = Operationalizing**	**3 = Optimizing**	**Rating**
29. Tier 1 (core) behavior and social-emotional practices exist that clearly identify school-wide expectations, social-emotional skills instruction, classroom management practices [25], and school-wide behavior and social-emotional data [26]	Tier 1 strategies are **_not_** developed and/or clearly defined	Tier 1 strategies incorporate **_1 of the following 4_**: • clearly defined school-wide expectations • classroom management practices • link to Tier 1 academic content/instruction • accessing school-wide behavior and social-emotional data sources	Tier 1 strategies incorporate **_2 or 3 of the following 4_**: • clearly defined school-wide expectations • classroom management practices • link to Tier 1 academic content/instruction • accessing school-wide behavior and social-emotional data	Tier 1 strategies incorporate **_all of the following_**: • clearly defined school-wide expectations • classroom management practices • link to Tier 1 academic content/instruction • accessing school-wide behavior and social-emotional data	
30. Tier 2 (supplemental) academic practices exist that include strategies addressing integrated common student needs, are linked to Tier 1 instruction[27], and are monitored using assessments/data sources tied directly to the academic, behavior and social-emotional skills taught	Tier 2 strategies are **_not_** developed and/or clearly defined	Tier 2 strategies incorporate **_1 of the following 4_**: • common student needs • link to Tier 1 instruction • link to behavior and social-emotional content/instruction • assessments/data sources link directly to the skills taught	Tier 2 strategies incorporate **_2 or 3 of the following 4_**: • common student needs • link to Tier 1 instruction • link to behavior and social-emotional content/instruction • assessments/data sources link directly to the skills taught	Tier 2 strategies incorporate **_all of the following_**: • common student needs, • link to Tier 1 instruction • link to behavior and social-emotional content/instruction • assessments/data sources link directly to the skills taught	

Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAM)					
Item	**0 = Not Implementing**	**1 = Emerging/Developing**	**2 = Operationalizing**	**3 = Optimizing**	**Rating**
31. Tier 2 (supplemental) behavior and social-emotional practices exist that address integrated common student needs, are linked to Tier 1 instruction[28], and are monitored using assessments/data sources tied directly to the skills taught	Tier 2 strategies are **_not_** developed and/or clearly defined	Tier 2 strategies incorporate **_1 of the following 4_**: • common student needs • link to Tier 1 instruction • link to academic content/instruction • assessments/data sources link directly to the skills taught	Tier 2 strategies incorporate **_2 or 3 of the following 4_**: • common student needs • link to Tier 1 instruction • link to academic content/instruction • assessments/data sources link directly to the skills taught	Tier 2 strategies incorporate **_all of the following_**: • common student needs • link to Tier 1 instruction • link to academic content • assessments/data sources link directly to the skills taught	
32. Tier 3 (intensive) academic practices [29] exist that include integrated strategies that are developed based on students' needs, are aligned with Tier 1 and Tier 2 instructional goals and strategies, and are monitored using assessments/data sources that link directly to skills taught	Tier 3 strategies are **_not_** developed and/or clearly defined	Tier 3 strategies incorporate **_1 of the following 4_**: • developed based on students' needs across academic, behavior and social-emotional domains • aligned with Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction • link to behavior and social-emotional content/instruction • assessments/data sources that link directly to the skills taught	Tier 3 strategies incorporate **_2 or 3 of the following 4_**: • developed based on students' needs across academic, behavior and social-emotional domains • aligned with Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction • link to behavior and social-emotional content/instruction • assessments/data sources that link directly to the skills taught	Tier 3 strategies incorporate **_all of the following_**: • developed based on students' needs across academic, behavior and social-emotional domains • aligned with Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction • linked to behavior and social-emotional content/instruction • monitored using assessments/data sources that link directly to the skills taught	

Appendix D – Counselor Recommendations

Recommendations for Social and Emotional Support of Students, Staff and Families

Recommendation 1:
Reduced caseload for elementary school counselors to 300:1 to match grades 6-12 by 2024.
- This would allow time for school counselors to offer additional Tier 1/Tier 2 social emotional supports to all students and staff. Increasing the time to 2024 gives the district several years to build staff. We realize it can't be done in one year with no one to hire.
- The state should provide the funding to districts to reduce the ratio of elementary school counselors.
- The SCDE should work with Universities to increase the number of students working toward the certification.

Justification for Recommendation 1:

1. This reduced ratio will enable school counselors to provide Tier 1 and some Tier 2 Social emotional supports to students and staff. Current ratios far exceed the recommended level:
   https://www.schoolcounselor.org/press
   https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/Publications/ratioreport.pdf .

2. The American School Counselor Association recommends that schools maintain a ratio of 250 students per school counselor for K-12, and that school counselors spend at least 80 percent of their time working directly with or indirectly for students.
   https://schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/Publications/ASCAEdTrustRHFactSheet.pdf

Current regulations related to Recommendation 1:
SECTION 59-59-100. Providing services of career specialist; qualification of specialist; career specialists currently employed by tech prep consortia. (A) By the 2006–07 school year, middle schools and by 2007–08 high schools shall provide students with the services of a career specialist who has obtained a bachelor's degree and who has successfully completed the national [Global] Career Development Facilitator ([G]CDF) certification training or certified guidance counselor having completed the Career Development Facilitator certification training. This career specialist shall work under the supervision of a certified guidance counselor. By the 2007–08 school year, each middle and high school shall have a student-to-guidance personnel ratio of three hundred to one. Guidance personnel include certified school guidance counselors and career specialists.

As seen below, elementary (K-5) is not included in EEDA funding.
SC Reg 43–205-
Administrative and Professional Personnel Qualifications, Duties, and Workloads-
Prekindergarten through Grade Five - School Counselors and Specialists in Art, Music, and Physical Education
    (a) Schools having any combination of grades one through five must employ the full-time equivalent (FTE) of a school counselor and specialists in art, music, and physical education (PE) in the following ratios for each area:
Average Daily Enrollment FTE Minimum Allotted Time Daily –
800 or more - 1.0 FTE /300 minutes
640–799- .8 FTE /240 minutes
480–639- .6 FTE/ 180 minutes
320–479- .4 FTE/ 120 minutes Less than 320 .2 60 minutes
http://scsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/2017-schoollaw-handout-CathyHazelwood.pdf

Recommendation 2:
Create a caseload requirement for school psychologists in South Carolina based on recommendations by the National Association of School Psychologists of 500-700:1 by 2024.
- The state should provide the funding to districts to reduce the ratio of elementary school counselors.
- The SCDE should work with Universities to identify recruitment options to increase the number of students working toward the certification.
- Work with districts to develop internship programs to keep more psychologists in the state.

Justification for Recommendation 2:
1. [National Association of School Psychologists recommended staff to student ratio](#)
   a. School psychologists can provide Tier 1-Tier 3 supports students and staff. Identifying a realistic caseload would provide them the time to offer counseling. Currently, the majority of their time is spent in evaluations and meetings, but they are trained in a Master's +30 program, which includes extensive training for counseling, MTSS, crisis response and teacher consultation.
2. Information from Dr. Scott Decker at USC from the South Carolina SLD Research Project conducted in 2016 for the OSES
   a. [The data](#)collected from across South Carolina includes the number of certified school psychs in each district. Additionally, to the estimate of the ideal number of school psychologists per district, the upper limit of NASP's recommendation which is 1 psych per 700 students was used. Thus, divided the total child count of the district by 700. To make it easier to read, the two columns for the above info are in bold. With those caveats in mind, the data we have would suggest there are approximately 520 school psychs in S.C. and based on NASP recommendation there should be around 1085.

Recommendation 3:
The SCDE conducts a needs assessment for school counselors, school psychologists, and mental health professionals to determine status of current caseloads and needs in districts for each group.

Justification for Recommendation 3:
1. Additional staff to support the social and emotional well being of our students and staff is needed across the state. A needs assessment is necessary to determine what mental health and social emotional supports are needed in each district.

Recommendation 4:
The SCDE creates a system to accept and vet exemplar plans for SEL and MTSS from districts across South Carolina. These plans should be research-based and include partnerships with community agencies. The SCDE would also create a website to provide each of the exemplars with continuous monitoring and updating of resources.

Justification for Recommendation 4:
1. There are districts and other states offering exemplar services related to SEL, PBIS and MTSS. If we can identify who those districts and states are, we could begin to develop a database of resources that can be shared across South Carolina. An example of this being done exceptionally well is [The Transitional Alliance of SC](#).
2. Creating something like [this](#) for South Carolina, along with approved curriculum and funding.
3. [Most recent DMH caseload/staff report](#)

Recommendation 5:
The state adds school counselors and school psychologists to the critical needs list.

Justification for Recommendation 5:
This would allow school psychologists and school counselors to receive loan forgiveness and to remove the salary cap for retirees. This would increase the pool of staff interested in serving in South Carolina schools. Neighboring states are offering this as an option as a recruitment tool.

Recommendation 5:
Consider expanding alternative pathways of certification for teachers and school counselors. Suggestions include expanding SC Create, expanding PACE to include school counselors, and including additional special education certifications in PACE to include an autism certification.

Justification for Recommendation 5:
1. Continue to support the work of SC Create in providing the funding and collaboration with SC Universities to offer alternative certification pathways to special education certification.SC Create only covers SPED certification options since IDEA funds are used. Are there options for a similar program for other areas of need? Nurses? Counselors? Mental Health?
2. Consider a PACE type program for school counselors. An alternative pathway for master's level counselors (LPC, for example) to begin working as school counselors while they are being certified as a school counselor through PACE.
3. PACE ED candidates have to carry a caseload that is primarily ED, Autism, or OHI classified students. Many of these candidates end up teaching in Autism classrooms with a significant lack of Autism training. We propose adding two additional classes to the PACE ED program in order to prepare staff to support ED and Autism students. The proposed classrooms will could be Intro to Autism and an Advanced Course on Behavior Interventions

Recommendation 6:
Consider flexibility or restructuring of the Caseload requirements for special education teachers.

Justification for Recommendation 6:
Often, Districts have PACE candidates apply for special education positions, but do not need Emotionally Disabled teachers, which is often the only certification offered through PACE. Could it be considered for additional SPED certifications to be added under PACE? Or, providing flexibility on the certifications required for each special education teacher so that districts can meet requirements related to special education caseloads and certifications.

Recommendation 7:
Recommend schools create an SEL committee to identify all available resources in the district and how those resources can be combined to provide the best possible SEL programming for students and staff.

Justification for Recommendation 7:
Sample presentation describing the planning from Cabarrus County, NC.

Appendix E – DHEC Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Schools: Management of suspect and confirmed COVID-19 cases

Interim COVID-19 guidance for schools:
Management of suspect and confirmed COVID-19 cases

This guidance is intended for schools to plan their response to known or possible cases of COVID-19 as well as known contacts. This is based on what is currently known about COVID-19 and will be updated as more information and guidance become available.

Students or staff with symptoms of COVID-19
Students and staff should be excluded from school if they have:
- Any one (1) of the following
    - Fever – or-
    - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing -or -
    - Loss of taste or smell -or –
    - New or worsening cough

- Any two (2) of the following:
    - Sore throat
    - Muscle or body aches
    - Chills
    - Fatigue
    - Headache
    - Congestion or runny nose
    - Diarrhea
    - Nausea or vomiting

Note: Any child with any one of these symptoms should consider not attending school regardless of meeting exclusion criteria. If these symptoms are explainable by an underlying condition (such as shortness of breath or cough for an individual with asthma) exclusion may not be necessary.

Schools should plan to have a room identified to isolate students or staff with symptoms of COVID-19 identified during the school day.

- Students and staff should be moved safely, respectfully, as well as in accordance with any applicable privacy laws or regulations, to the isolation room for evaluation. The individual should be provided a mask if they are able to use one, and students should be supervised by a staff member who maintains at least six feet of distance and uses appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) if available.

- School nurses and other healthcare providers should use Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions when caring for sick people. See: What Healthcare Personnel Should Know About Caring for Patients with Confirmed or Possible COVID19 Infection.

Return to school

- Advise sick staff members and children not to return until they have met criteria for return.
- Students or staff excluded for these symptoms should not return until they have either tested negative for COVID-19 or a medical evaluation determines that their symptoms were more likely due to another cause (e.g. sore throat due to strep throat). In this later case, the individual can return when they meet criteria for that condition.
- Students or staff that require testing for COVID-19 will require a negative PCR test (mouth or nose swab) or similar rapid test that directly detects the virus or must complete the current isolation criteria for COVID-19 to return to school.
- Current **isolation criteria** for COVID-19:
  - Students and staff who test positive for COVID-19 and persons with symptoms of COVID-19 (see list above) who do not get tested, should isolate until:
    - Ten (10) days have passed since symptoms started - and –
    - Three (3) days (72 hours) have passed since last fever without taking medicine to reduce fever - and -
    - Overall improvement in symptoms.
  - Those who test positive by a PCR test but do not have symptoms will be required to stay out of school until ten (10) days after the specimen was collected.
  - The criteria above should be used to determine eligibility to return to school. Negative PCR test results are not required after meeting these criteria.

Testing

A student or staff member who develops symptoms of COVID-19 but does not get tested could limit DHEC's ability to appropriately respond to new cases and ensure the health and safety of other students and staff. PCR testing (nose or throat swab) or similar rapid test that directly detects the virus is required as there is delay in developing detectable antibodies. A negative antibody test is insufficient to rule out a new infection.

- Location of testing sites is available on the DHEC website: https://scdhec.gov/infectious-diseases/viruses/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-screening-testing-sites
- Location of DHEC mobile and pop-up testing sites: https://www.scdhec.gov/infectious-diseases/viruses/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-mobile-pop-clinics

Cases in classroom

If a student or staff member tests positive, they could have been contagious with the virus up to 48 hours before their symptoms began or before their test specimen was collected (for those with no symptoms).

  - Prevention - Routinely using these precautions will help avoid the need to quarantine all classroom contacts of persons with COVID-19:

- o It is essential that staff ensure maximum distancing between students and other staff while in the classroom and throughout the day to limit the possibility of transmission.
- o Encourage the use of masks among students and staff able to use them.
- o Anyone known to be a **close contact** (defined as being within six (6) feet for fifteen (15) minutes or more) to a COVID-19 case while contagious must be excluded from school for fourteen (14) days after last contact with the person with COVID-19. This exclusion requirement applies even if masks were worn if social distancing was not maintained.
- o For any classrooms where social distancing could not be maintained (classes with young children who do not have assigned seating throughout the day), all children and staff must be considered close contacts and must complete a fourteen (14) day quarantine period.
- o Students and teachers in a classroom with a known COVID-19 case in which social distancing was reliably maintained should remain together in the same cohort to the extent that is possible. They should receive screening for fever and symptoms (see above) each morning until 14 days after last contact with the case. Note: anyone determined to be a "close contact" must be excluded.
  - o Any of these students or teachers who are monitored and found to have symptoms of COVID-19 should be sent home and excluded and will be required to get tested or complete the required isolation period to return to school.
- o The classroom will need to be closed for cleaning and disinfection before use again.

Quarantine

Some students or staff may have been told they were a close contact to a case of COVID-19 and have to complete a quarantine period. This means they will be required to stay home so they do not risk exposing others to COVID-19 if they become sick. DHEC staff will inform them of the length of their quarantine period. For students, a parents' note that they have been cleared from quarantine may be used to allow return to school

- Close Contact: The standard quarantine period is fourteen (14) days after last close contact with person while they were contagious with COVID-19.
- Household contact: If the student or staff lives in the same household as the case and has daily close contact, they will have to quarantine for an additional fourteen (14) days after the day their household member has been cleared from their isolation period.
- Other household members in quarantine: If the student or staff lives in the same household as someone in quarantine, they will not necessarily need to quarantine themselves unless the household member in quarantine is then determined to be a COVID-19 case. DHEC will notify those who are required to complete quarantine.

Note: This guidance is consistent with information available as of July 8, 2020 and may be updated as new information on this novel virus and evolving situation become available.

Appendix F – Bus Operations

INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL BUSES

Social Distancing and Capacity

- The number of students on the bus should be a maximum of **50%** of standard capacity.
- Allow only one child on a seat at a time to the extent possible.
    - To allow up to 50% capacity, some seats may be occupied by two students. The first uses of two students on a seat should pair household members together on the seat.
    - Three students on a seat should not occur.
    - As feasible, consider increasing the number of buses in use to decrease the number of seats with double occupancy.
- Consider use of assigned seats which remain consistent, in order to facilitate the spreading out of students as much as possible and the seating of household members together as necessary. Alternately, may consider an adult monitor on the bus to ensure appropriate seating is occurring.
- As possible, load the bus back-to-front.

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Each bus shall be cleaned then disinfected using electrostatic handheld sprayer and EPA-approved disinfectant (e.g., BioTab7 disinfectant) twice per day after completion of morning and afternoon routes.
    - If a sprayer is unavailable, the disinfectant may be applied manually to seats, seat belts, portions of windows that students may touch, handrails, and driver's seat and controls.
- Frequently wipe down with disinfectant frequently touched surfaces, including those in the entrance touched by passengers, such as handrails, and those touched by the driver.
    - Disinfect with a product that is EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19, diluted bleach solution, or alcohol solution with at least 70% alcohol.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method, contact time, and personal protective equipment).
- Ensure adequate supplies to support frequent cleaning and disinfection practices.

Ventilation

- Increase air exchange on the bus and the input of outside air via available mechanisms, including opening the roof vents and some windows as weather allows.
    - For buses with air conditioning, increasing circulation of outside air should still be performed to the extent possible, since the air conditioning on these buses only recirculates interior air.
    - Recognize that frequent openings of the door will also increase air exchange.

INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL BUSES

Personal Prevention Practices
- Drivers should wear face masks or cloth face coverings. Consideration may be given to recommending them for students.
  - Cloth face coverings should not be used on children under two years old, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone unable to remove the face covering without assistance.
  - The CDC has a pattern and a video available demonstrating how to make a cloth face covering.
- Drivers may wear disposable gloves, but they should be optional and are not routinely recommended unless cleaning and disinfecting. Frequent use of hand sanitizer is more strongly recommended, with care being taken not to spill any on the floor of the bus when using.
  - If gloves are used, they should be changed when soiled or damaged or after touching something outside of the driver's controls. Used gloves should be disposed of in a lined trash can, and hands should be washed with soap and water for 20 seconds after removing them.
  - Care should be taken not to touch one's face or mask/face covering while wearing gloves, and if this occurs, the gloves should then be changed.

Messaging to Parents
- Educate drivers and students and their parents on the symptoms of COVID-19 and the importance of staying home if they have any of the symptoms or if anyone in their household tests positive for the disease.
- Frequently message to parents via a variety of methods the importance of social distancing, including not allowing students to congregate at bus stops.
- Translate messaging to appropriate languages.

References
- DHEC COVID-19 webpage: scdhec.gov/covid19
- What Bus Transit Operators Need to Know About COVID-19 (CDC): cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/bus-transit-operator

This is consistent with guidance available as of June 4, 2020 and may be updated as new information on this novel virus and evolving situation become available.
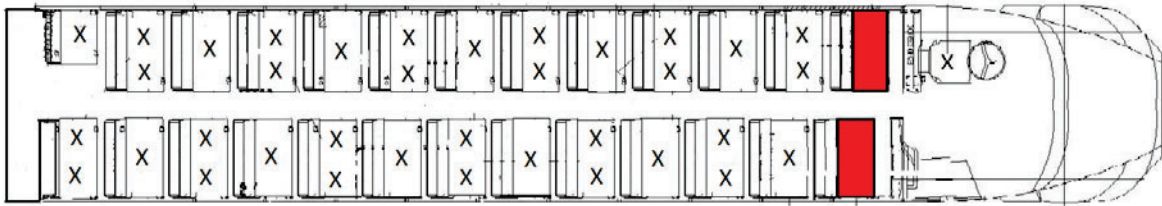
COVID-19 Pandemic Recommended
Maximum Bus Capacities

Listed Bus Capacity	Covid-19 Mitigation Capacity
78	36
77	36
72	33
66	30
65	29
62	28
60	27
54	24
*35L	18
*33L	18
*29L	15
23	8

(*) Formulated by reducing the standard seating capacity by 54% while leaving the maximum wheelchair capacity at 100% of buses listed capacity.

Note: No students should sit in the first two seats.

COVID-19 Pandemic Recommended
Maximum Bus Capacities

77 passenger bus showing 36 passengers.
This represents approximately 54% reduction in listed capacity with elementary aged students, and a 30% reduction in listed capacity with middle/high aged students.

Note: No students should sit in the first two seats.

Appendix G – Guidelines for Classroom Safety and Student/Teacher Health in the Arts

Guidelines for Best Practices in Safety and Instruction in the Arts
Note: This document will be revised as additional research is conducted on best practices in classroom safety for the arts. For the latest updates to this appendix, please check www.abcprojectsc.com *after June 24, 2020.*

Comprehensive Guidance for Multiple Disciplines within the Arts
South Carolina Music Education Association
- [COVID-19 Resources](#)(includes materials for Elementary General Music, Band, Choir, Orchestra, Band, and Piano)

National Arts Education Associations:
General

National Association for Music Education COVID-19 Resources
- https://nafme.org/covid-19/
- https://nafme.org/my-classroom/virtual-learning-resources-for-music-educators/
- [Social and Emotional Learning Resources](#)
- [COVID-19 Instrument Cleaning Guidelines](#)

National Art Education Association
- *[Elementary Division](#)*
- *[Middle Level Division](#)*
- *[Secondary Division](#)*
- *[Higher Education Division](#)*
- *[Preservice Division](#)*
- *[Supervision and Administration Division](#)*
- *[Museum Education Division](#)*
- *[Social Emotional Learning](#)*
- *[Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#)*

Band
- American Bandmasters Association
  - [ABA COVID-19 Student Safety](#)
- [NFHS Guidance for a Return to High School Marching Band](#)

Chorus

- ***American Choral Directors Association***
  - [COVID-19 Response Committee Report](#)
  - [Resources for Choral Professionals During the Pandemic](#)
- ***National Association of Teachers of Singing***
  - [COVID Resources Page](#)
  - [Webinar on Safety in Choral Settings](#)
- ***Chorus America***
  - [Singing and Reopening Safely](#)

Dance

- ***National Dance Education Organization***
  - [Teaching Dance Online Webinar Series](#)
- ***Dance Education Organization***
  - *Elementary-* [Identifying Promising Strategies: Ideas for Online Dance for Students Ages 4-8](#)
  - *Middle & High-* [Junior/Secondary NHSDA Additional COVID-19 Induction Ideas](#)
- ***Dance USA***
  - [Return to Dancing and Training Considerations Due to COVID-19](#)
  - [COVID-19 FAQ for dancers and dance companies returning to the studios](#)
- ***NDEO***
  - [Identifying Promising Strategies: Ideas for Online Dance for Students Ages 4-8](#)

Theatre

- ***Educational Theatre Association:***
  - [Creating Online Learning](#)
- ***Musical Theatre Educators Alliance***
    - [Resources for Teaching Amidst COVID-19](#)
- ***Association for Theatre in Higher Education***
  - [Resources for Teaching Online](#)
- ***Dramatics.org***
  - Acting: https://dramatics.org/tag/acting/
  - Stage Management: https://dramatics.org/tag/stage-managers-crew/
  - Writing: https://dramatics.org/tag/writing/
- [Southeastern Theatre Conference COVID Resources](#)
- [Actors' Equity Association Core Principles for Safe and Healthy Theatre Productions](#)

Visual

National Art Education Association
- [NAEA Tips for Returning to the Visual Art and Design Classroom](#)
- [Tips for Teaching Visual Art and Design in a Distance Learning Environment](#)

Other National Arts Guidance:
National Federation of State High School Associations
- Resources for Music and Theatre
- National Federation of High Schools COVID-19 Study
- COVID-19 aerosol research study
- Guidance for a Return to High School Marching Band

Arts Education Partnership
- COVID-19 Update: State Policy Responses and Other Executive Actions to the Coronavirus in Public Schools

Texas Center for Performance Arts Health
- We Mean Clean Guidelines

State Arts Education Affiliates:
South Carolina Arts Alliance
- Arts Reopening Guide

Palmetto State Arts Education
- SC District Arts Coordinators Roundtable Discussion; COVID-19 and the Impact on Visual and Performing Arts Programs

South Carolina Music Educators Association
- Guide for Return to Summer Ensemble Rehearsals
- SCMEA/SCBDA Returning to Marching Band- Summer Guidelines

SC Dance Education Organization – not yet established
SC Theatre Education Association – not yet established
South Carolina Art Education Association
- Guidelines for the Visual Arts Classroom

SC Consortium of Gifted Education – meeting scheduled for late June
South Carolina Arts Commission
- https://www.southcarolinaarts.com/covid-19-response/

By District:
PSAE Joint Arts Administrators Institute – scheduled for late June
Richland School District Two
- Orchestra in Fall 2020

Relevant Guidance from AccelerateSC
- Reopening and Operating Attractions (including performances)

Appendix H – SCDE Recommendations for Physical Education and Physical Activity

South Carolina Department of Education
Recommendations for Physical Education and Physical Activity

Strategies and recommendations for schools to implement physical education and physical activity programs consistent with the recommendations provided by the CDC.
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html

Physical Education:
Planned, sequential, K-12 standards-based program of curricula and instruction designed to develop motor skills, knowledge and behaviors for active living, physical fitness, sportsmanship, self-efficacy, emotional intelligence and physical literacy. (SHAPE America, 2015)

- Students wash/disinfect hands before/after physical education class.
- Consider activities that require limited or no equipment (lifetime fitness, health-related fitness, etc.).
- If equipment is necessary, create an inventory of items that can be effectively cleaned before and after each class.
- If needed, consider non-porous equipment such as synthetic sports balls, vinyl beanbags, plastic/resin materials (striking implements, scooters, targets, hula-hoops, poly floor spots, cones, etc.).
- Incorporate movement activities that can be performed while maintaining appropriate spacing/distancing between students.
- Post signage/visuals in all physical education/physical activity areas to remind students of social distancing.
- Designate personal space spots/areas for students to use throughout the class/lesson.
- Group students and allow one group to move in a designated space while the others perform movements in their own personal space/area.
- Incorporate stations, circuits, zones to reduce amount of close contact between students.
- Consider increasing opportunities for outdoor activities (weather permitting).
- Secondary schools should consider locker room spaces and if need exists for students to dress out for physical education. If utilized, limit number of students entering at one time and develop a plan for routine cleaning of surfaces.
- Designate specific entrances and exits for all physical education/physical activity areas/facilities.
- To support students with disabilities continue to utilize the modifications and specially designed instruction contained in a student's IEP or accommodations recommended by a student's 504 plan.

Physical Activity
Opportunities before, during and after school (recess, intramurals, classroom activity/movement, walk/run clubs, etc.)

- Consider dividing the recess area or staggering recess times, rather than allowing multiple classes to use the same area/same time.
- Focus on providing activities that do not require the use of equipment.

- Incorporate multiple activity areas/stations/circuits at recess and allow students to choose area for physical activity (monitor group sizes).
- Use of larger playground equipment may need to be discontinued, if it cannot be cleaned between uses.
- Classroom physical activity/movement can be accomplished by having students staying at or near their assigned desks/areas.
- Use visual guides such as floor tape, poly spots, stations, cones, and signs to promote spacing among students.
- Consider maximizing outdoor time by scheduling group meetings, clubs, and activities outside, when possible.

Appendix I – SC School Library Media Services

South Carolina Association of School Librarians

South Carolina School Library Media Services Re-Entry

All of these recommendations are based on the premise that school libraries can modify services in order to provide equitable access to all library patrons. We recognize that school libraries are essential to teaching and learning and it is imperative that every possible effort is made to avoid eliminating library services to school communities.

- In accordance with school/district policy staff should wear personal protective equipment when interacting with students and other staff members
- Sanitize tables, chairs, and rugs between classes and patrons
- Provide hand sanitizer stations
- Staff, volunteers, and student helpers should wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after handling books and other materials
- Use air filtration units/systems to reduce harmful microbes that are in the air
- Spacing of chairs and tables to allow for social distancing
- Examine the library space to determine the safe number of visitors allowed in the library at one time to maintain social distancing
- Use signage throughout the library space to help patrons manage their social distance
- In order to limit touching books, student browsing can be done online (Examples: curated resource lists, Destiny collections, Youtube booktalks, etc.)
- Students can put books on hold or request a book using Google Forms or a similar tool and books can be delivered or picked up when ready
- For younger grades, librarians can display books for selection and/or bring a cart of books to the classrooms for students to choose from
- Limit student movement around school and allow the librarian to conduct instruction in the classroom
- After books, periodicals, makerspace materials, and other equipment are returned they should be quarantined for 72 hours before checking in, reshelving, or checking out to other students per CDC guidelines
- Computer labs, maker space equipment and all other non-print materials should be sanitized after each use
- Classes visiting the library for a lesson should bring their own materials/pencil boxes and staff should allow time between class visits for cleaning
- Utilize flexible scheduling to allow for safe distancing practices, collaborative teaching/learning
- Suspend overdue library fines due to possibility of e-learning days and disrupted schedules

- Use keyboard covers in computer labs and on stand alone computer stations
- Suspend use of water fountains
- Restrict use of restrooms
- Add plastic barrier/shield to circulation desk to minimize physical contact
- Suspend interlibrary loan between schools
- Remove stuffed animals and other decorative items that cannot be sanitized
- Suspend student finger scanning and self checkout stations

Schools should also consider the myriad of ways that media specialists can support and lead student learning, even during distance learning, including:
- Provide virtual storytimes/lessons
- Curate resources for families and teachers.
- Hold "open office hours" to provide tech support and research guidance for teachers, students and parents
- Co-teach virtual lessons alongside classroom teachers
- Establish an online presence through website, library catalog, and learning management systems
- Partner with local public library systems to ensure students and families have access to public library online resources (eBooks, audiobooks, subscription databases)
- Provide professional development so that teachers are using reliable online resources with students as well as using best practices for literacy at all age levels
- Plan for virtual author visits and field trips that align with units of study

References

Pandemic Best Practices
Humidity Control in School Facilities
Fall 2020 and Charleston County School District Teacher Librarians
2020-21 Anderson County School Library Re-Opening Plans
The Library Community Moving Forward in the New Normal
Coping in the Time of COVID-19
Handling Library Collections and Materials During a Pandemic
CDC Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities
CDC Disinfection and Sterilization
IMLS, CDC Offer Guidance for Disinfecting Returned Library Books

Appendix J – CTE Guidelines for Re-opening Facilities and Returning to In-person Instruction

AccelerateED Task Force: Guidance and Recommendations for 2020–21 School Year
June 22, 2020
Page 49

SOUTH CAROLINA
CTE
CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Career and Technical Education: Guidelines for Re-opening Facilities and Returning to In-person Instruction

The following document contains specific guidance for CTE programs. Guidance is being provided by the South Carolina Career and Technical Education Association (CTEA) and the Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE).   It is essential for the local districts, business & industry, and other educational partners to work collectively to ensure the safety and health of all faculty, staff, and students in the school environment and in the community while still providing a high quality CTE program. This guidance is given to ensure districts have the proper tools and information necessary to provide safe and effective CTE programs. To consider a wide range of perspectives, the AccelerateED Instruction Sub-committee created a working group to help develop this guidance for CTE instruction. In addition to the CTEA and OCTE, the working group included representatives from schools, districts, career centers and other businesses & industries.

During the 2019-2020 academic year, CTE had the largest enrollment of students across the state of South Carolina. All CTE programs of study provide students with the opportunity for hands-on learning, industry credential attainment, work-based learning, and dual credit opportunities in partnership with one of the 16 technical colleges throughout the state. COVID-19 school closures during the school year significantly impacted the ability of CTE students to complete work-based learning, hands-on laboratory hours, along with the necessary content hours needed to earn industry credentials in specific career programs. Guidance is given in preparation for the fall semester and will be updated as is necessary with regards to the change of data and information related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Foundational CTE Principles:

The following foundational principles have helped to inform our guidance for re-opening facilities and returning to in- person instruction and are provided to demonstrate the unique nature of CTE courses/programs in relation to other core academic courses.

1. CTE courses and programs provide a variety of opportunity for students to earn industry credentials, postsecondary certificates, and degrees. Maintaining access to credentialing throughout this time is critical for the benefit of workforce development.

2. CTE courses are most suitable for a face-to-face manner where students have the opportunity to learn and practice skills in a hands-on manner. In fact, many courses have hands-on requirements that cannot be replicated or recreated in a virtual environment.

3. The overwhelming majority of CTE courses are eligible for dual credit, and therefore it is necessary that we align secondary CTE practices to postsecondary practices.

4. Providing all students equitable access to high quality CTE programs of study that provide the opportunity to earn dual credit, industry certifications, and complete work-based learning has always been a priority for CTE programs and is even more important during this time.

CTE Instruction

- Consider alternate forms of instruction that fit a traditional, hybrid, and/or eLearning model to the extent possible.

- Consider synchronous and asynchronous learning options for all students participating in CTE learning.

- Establish policies that allow participation in CTE courses and programs in the event a student cannot or does not feel comfortable attending school on a regular basis.

- In the event of school closure due to COVID-19, consider continuing small group class setting options for courses that require hands-on demonstration for mastery, completion, and/or attainment of an industry credential.

- Refer to program specific guidance to determine the continuation of hands-on learning in specific programs that require a significant amount of PPE as a part of instruction (i.e. firefighting and welding)

- Districts should work closely with partnering Technical Colleges to ensure continuation of dual credit CTE courses in the event of school closure or disruption in instruction due to COVID-19.

- Districts should begin considering how they may provide virtual or remote learning opportunities for students or instructors that are medically vulnerable this fall. Districts may need to make individual time in the lab or other accommodations available to these students in order to complete hands-on requirements or performance assessments.

- State health officials have indicated that planning for potential future disruptions as a result of a second wave of COVID-19 and/or a potentially severe flu season is advisable. In anticipation of this possibility, many postsecondary institutions are moving their start dates for the fall earlier and hoping to finish their semester by fall break. Following their lead, we recommend that schools and career centers start their CTE programs as scheduled and review their syllabi to try and include as much lab time as possible early in the fall.

CTE Funding

- Prioritize a portion of additional federal and local funds to include the C.A.R.E.S Act funding for CTE instruction at local career centers, comprehensive high school CTE programs, and multi-district centers.

CTE Business & Industry Engagement

- Work with local business and industry to continue providing quality work-based learning experiences, internships, and apprenticeships for students.