

**Guidance for K-12 School Operations for In-Person Learning:  
Layered Prevention Strategies and COVID-19 Community Levels  
August 1, 2022**

As we enter the 2022-2023 school year, the COVID-19 pandemic is still affecting all those who learn, work and volunteer in our school environments. In promoting as much in-person learning time as possible, there may be risks and benefits that still must be weighed in each learning community as COVID-19 levels change over time. The purpose of this document is to provide information on prevention strategies that help protect students, teachers and staff and slow outbreaks of COVID-19 in K-12 schools based on [CDC guidelines for K-12 schools](#) and [COVID-19 community level estimates](#) developed by CDC. This guidance is intended to help school administrators and local health officials select appropriate, layered prevention strategies in their communities. SARS-CoV-2 transmission in K-12 schools is largely influenced by disease incidence in the community; therefore, learning environment strategies may need to be flexible in response to community changes. Layered prevention strategies should be implemented in response to the following factors:

- [Level of COVID-19 in the county \(updated weekly\)](#).
- Occurrence of outbreaks in the school or community.
- [COVID-19 vaccination coverage in the community](#) and among students, teachers and staff.
- Availability of SARS-CoV-2 testing for students, teachers and staff.
- Social, behavioral or medical vulnerability factors that may affect the risk of transmission and feasibility of different prevention strategies in the school or individual classrooms.

**Layered prevention strategies and COVID-19 community levels**

COVID-19 community levels can be low, medium, or high and are determined by the number of hospital beds being used for COVID-19 patients, hospital admissions for COVID-19, and the total number of new COVID-19 cases in a community. When [COVID-19 community levels](#) are classified as high (red), full implementation of most or all layers of protection is recommended. Schools should clearly communicate their strategies and anticipated changes in plans.

## COVID-19 Community Level and K-12 Schools

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Baseline prevention strategies	Localized and targeted mitigation	Most layered prevention strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay up to date with vaccinations.</li> <li>• Stay home when sick.</li> <li>• 5-day isolation + 5-day masking for individuals with COVID-19.</li> <li>• Targeted mask use following at-school exposures.</li> <li>• Promote testing for sick or exposed persons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay up to date with vaccinations.</li> <li>• Stay home when sick.</li> <li>• 5-day isolation + 5-day masking for individuals with COVID-19.</li> <li>• Targeted mask use following at-school exposures.</li> <li>• Consider universal masking for all students and staff.</li> <li>• Promote testing for sick or exposed persons.</li> <li>• Cohort classrooms and limit mixing between students, where possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay up to date with vaccinations.</li> <li>• Stay home when sick.</li> <li>• 5-day isolation + 5-day masking for individuals with COVID-19.</li> <li>• Universal masking for all students and staff indoors and on buses.</li> <li>• Promote testing for sick or exposed persons.</li> <li>• Cohort classrooms, limit mixing between students, where possible.</li> <li>• Limit large gatherings and activities</li> <li>• Consider physical distancing of &gt;3ft.</li> </ul>

<b>Vaccination</b>	
<u>All levels</u>	<p><b>Promote and offer vaccination</b> to help increase the proportion of students, teachers, staff and family members who are vaccinated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging students, teachers, staff and family members to stay <a href="#">up to date</a> on COVID-19 vaccinations.</li> <li>• Providing on-site vaccination or <a href="#">hosting vaccination clinics at schools</a>.</li> <li>• Working with local partners to offer vaccination to eligible students and family members during pre-sport/extracurricular activity summer physicals.</li> <li>• Providing information to families about vaccine safety and availability in the community.</li> </ul>
<b>Masks</b>	
<u>Low or Medium</u>	<p><b>Targeted use of well-fitting high-quality masks should be considered during the following circumstances:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For early return from isolation (prior to 10 days) for individuals who test positive for COVID-19.</li> <li>• During clusters or outbreaks of COVID-19 in a classroom, grade or school.</li> <li>• Allowed for any individuals who want to mask for personal health reasons.</li> </ul> <p><b>Consider universal masking for students and staff during COVID-19 clusters or outbreaks.</b></p>
<u>High</u>	<p><b>Consider universal masking for all persons 2 years of age and older while indoors</b> in all classroom and non-classroom settings, including buses operated by public and private school systems, unless otherwise exempted (e.g., cannot wear a mask due to disability), regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status.</p>
<b>Physical distancing</b>	
<u>Low or Medium</u>	<p><b>Physical distancing of 3 feet or more between individuals is not routinely recommended but should be considered after COVID-19 exposures, during outbreaks or for high-risk persons.</b></p>
<u>High</u>	<p><b>Consider use of cohorts or pods</b> (a stable group with fixed membership that stays together through activities) to minimize opportunities for transmission.</p>
<b>Isolation</b>	
<u>All levels</u>	<p><b>Ensure sick students, teachers or staff stay home</b> if they have fever and/or symptoms of COVID-19, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Fever (<math>\geq 100.4^{\circ}\text{F}</math>) or feeling feverish (e.g., chills, sweating)</li> <li>○ New cough</li> <li>○ Difficulty breathing</li> <li>○ Sore throat</li> <li>○ Muscle aches or body aches</li> <li>○ Vomiting or diarrhea</li> <li>○ New loss of taste or smell</li> </ul> <p><b>Instruct parents/guardian, teachers and staff to report positive COVID-19 test results</b> to the school or school district. Results can be self-reported.</p>



	<p><b>Ensure persons who test positive for COVID-19 self-isolate</b> away from school for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>At least 5 full days from the day that their symptoms started if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.</b> The first day of symptoms is considered day 0. The individual may return to school after 5 days when their symptoms are fully resolved or after 10 days even if they have lingering symptoms. The individual must continue to wear a well-fitting mask for 10 full days when around others indoors. If the individual is unable to wear a mask properly and consistently in indoor school settings, they should self-isolate from school for 10 full days.</li> <li>• <b>5 full days from the date of testing if they have never developed symptoms.</b> The day of testing is considered day 0. The individual must continue to wear a well-fitting mask for 10 full days when around others indoors. If the individual is unable to wear a mask properly and consistently in indoor school settings, they should self-isolate from school for 10 full days. If the individual develops symptoms of COVID-19, they should follow the above isolation guidance for someone with symptoms.</li> </ul> <p><b>Direct sick persons to isolate at home away from school.</b> Sick students, teachers or staff who are not tested for COVID-19 may return when their symptoms resolve. Consider implementing a program to offer on-site rapid COVID-19 testing for sick students, teachers or staff.</p>
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<b>Exposures and Quarantine</b>	
<u>All levels</u>	<p><b>When COVID-19 exposures occur:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact tracing following school exposures to COVID-19 is not expected. Where feasible, schools should notify families and staff when a known exposure to COVID-19 occurs in the classroom or in school settings.</li> <li>• Everyone who is known to have had close contact to a person with COVID-19 is recommended to be tested 5 days or more after the exposure.</li> <li>• Quarantine is not routinely recommended following exposures to COVID-19 for people without symptoms.</li> <li>• Targeted use of well-fitting masks for 5 days should be encouraged when COVID-19 clusters or outbreaks occur in classroom or school settings.</li> </ul>

<b>Additional guidance</b>	
<u>All levels</u>	<p><b>Consider implementing no-cost COVID-19 testing</b> for students, teachers, and/or staff to help promptly identify and isolate cases and to guide the use of layered prevention strategies in the school. Schools may order COVID-19 at-home test kits for K-12 students or staff from KDPH (supplies may be limited). Screening testing of asymptomatic persons can be considered for individuals participating in sports, extracurricular activities, or other activities with elevated risk of COVID-19 transmission (e.g., singing, shouting, playing wind instruments) when COVID-19 community levels are high or when known exposures to COVID-19 have occurred in the school setting. Testing should be conducted with informed consent from the appropriate person or parent/guardian.</p> <p><b>Improve facility ventilation</b> to the greatest extent possible to increase circulation of outdoor air and increase delivery of clean air. Utilize outdoor spaces, where possible.</p>



**Teach and reinforce handwashing** with soap and water for 20 seconds or use of hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Ensure adequate supplies and opportunities for hand hygiene.

**Improve facility cleaning** to the greatest extent possible. In general, cleaning once a day is enough to sufficiently remove potential virus that may be on surfaces. Consider cleaning high-touch, shared surfaces more frequently.