

Decision Matrix for School Reopening and Phased Mitigation

Indicators	Blue - Low Transmission	Yellow - Moderate Transmission	Orange - Substantial Transmission	Red - High Transmission
Low Impact to School	<p>School Status⁺: PreK-12 Open to in-person instruction to the maximum extent possible.</p> <p>Distance[*]: A minimum of 3-6 feet is recommended</p> <p>Extracurriculars/Sports^{**}: Open (indoors or outdoors); distance to the extent possible.</p> <p>Continually review mitigation strategies to ensure optimal adherence.</p>	<p>School Status: PreK-12 Open to in-person instruction to the maximum extent possible</p> <p>Distance[*]: Ensuring a minimum of 3-6 feet is strongly recommended and critically important. Consider a minimum 6 feet distance standard for middle/high and adults during substantial and high transmission.</p> <p>Extracurriculars/Sports^{**}: Outdoors only; sports and extracurriculars where distancing can be maintained are preferred.</p> <p>Schools that are open with low impact can stay open. Continually review mitigation strategies to ensure optimal adherence.</p>		
Medium Impact to School	<p>School Status:</p> <p>PreK-12: Open to in-person instruction to the maximum extent possible</p> <p>Distance[*]: A minimum of 3-6 feet is recommended</p> <p>Extracurriculars/Sports^{**}: Open (indoors or outdoors); distance to extent possible</p> <p>Re-evaluate mitigation measures; CDC recommends prioritizing universal masking and physical distancing as the two most important strategies.</p>	<p>School Status:</p> <p>PreK-12: Open to in-person instruction to the maximum extent possible. Cohorting and pods can assist with optimizing distance.</p> <p>Distance[*]: Minimum of 3-6 feet is strongly recommended and critically important. Consider a minimum 6 feet distance standard for middle/high and adults.</p> <p>Extracurriculars/Sports^{**}: Outdoors only; sports and extracurriculars where distancing can be maintained are preferred.</p> <p>Re-evaluate mitigation measures; CDC recommends prioritizing universal masking and physical distancing as the two most important strategies.</p>	<p>School Status:</p> <p>Elementary (PreK-5): Open to in-person instruction to the maximum extent possible. Cohorting and pods can assist with optimizing distance.</p> <p>Middle/High: Consider temporary hybrid/reduced attendance. Focus on priority learners[^] of all ages as most important for any amount of in-person instruction.</p> <p>Distance[*]: Strict adherence to a minimum of 3-6 feet is strongly recommended and critically important. Consider a minimum 6 feet distance standard for middle/high and adults.</p> <p>Extracurriculars/Sports^{**}: Outdoors only; activities where distancing can be maintained are preferred.</p> <p>Re-evaluate mitigation measures; CDC recommends prioritizing universal masking and physical distancing as the two most important strategies.</p>	

Decision Matrix for School Reopening and Phased Mitigation

Indicators	Blue - Low Transmission	Yellow - Moderate Transmission	Orange - Substantial Transmission	Red - High Transmission
High Impact to School	<p>School Status: PreK-12: Consider temporary hybrid/reduced attendance, focusing on priority learners of all ages as most important for any amount of in-person instruction.</p> <p>Distance*: Strict adherence to a minimum of 3-6 feet is strongly recommended and critically important. Consider a minimum 6 feet distance standard for middle/high and adults.</p> <p>Extracurriculars/Sports**: Outdoors only; Consider temporarily cancelling sports and cancelling extracurriculars where distance cannot be maintained.</p> <p>Re-evaluate mitigation measures; CDC recommends prioritizing universal masking and physical distancing as the two most important strategies.</p>			<p>School Status: PreK-12: Temporary Virtual Instruction for most students***</p> <p>Extracurriculars/Sports**: Sports and extracurricular activities are temporarily virtual only</p> <p>Re-evaluate mitigation strategies. CDC recommends prioritizing universal masking and physical distancing as the two most important strategies.</p>

***School status:** “Open to the maximum extent possible” means open to as many students as possible with mitigation strategies in place, including minimum distancing, universal masking, cleaning, hand hygiene and other strategies in place as recommended. Hybrid or partial in-person may be necessary to accommodate distancing, with an emphasis on elementary and priority learners of all ages.

*There is varied guidance regarding the optimal physical distance for the prevention of COVID-19 disease transmission. CDC recommends that during low or moderate community transmission, schools adopt physical distancing of six feet or more to the greatest extent possible. During high or substantial community transmission, they recommend physical distancing of 6 feet is required in schools. The American Academy of Pediatrics states that physical distance between desks should follow current public health guidance, and desks should be placed at least 3 feet apart and ideally six feet apart. AAP also states that schools should weigh the benefits of strict adherence to a six-foot spacing rule between students with the potential downside if doing so limits in-person instruction to the degree that remote learning is the only alternative. The distancing standards in this current Revised Interim Guidance aim to balance reasonable efforts to prevent disease transmission with the feasibility of offering in-person instruction to as many children as possible. Increased distancing (e.g., closer to a minimum of six feet) may be more important for middle/high school students and adults and during times of higher community transmission. Physical distancing is especially important during times when masks are not worn, such as while eating and drinking. VDH uses proximity of six feet or less for more than 15 minutes to determine the need for quarantining persons in contact with a COVID-19 case - school systems need to consider the disruption immediate quarantining will cause on continuity of learning when a COVID-19 case is introduced into the classroom and they have not used the six feet of physical distancing as a standard.

**VDH strongly advises athletes to wear masks at all times during group training, competition, and on the sidelines. This is particularly important indoors and for high contact activities. Public health may recommend temporary closure of a classroom or cancellation or postponement of sports/extracurricular activities where the outbreak(s) has/have occurred.

^Priority learners: Students for whom in-person instruction is most critical includes but may not be limited to those who are early learners (PreK-3), students with disabilities and English learners. It is generally thought that these groups are the most disproportionately impacted by the negative effects of a lack of in-person instruction.

***Schools should consider, in consultation with parents and IEP teams, continuing to serve students with disabilities who most need in-person instruction, in the building.

- **Adherence to all mitigation strategies is critical no matter the level of community transmission. Universal masking (persons age 5 and older) in schools is required per [Executive Order 72](#).**
- **Physical Distancing:** For all levels of transmission, the optimal level of distance is physical distancing of six feet or more to the greatest extent possible; no less than 3 feet is acceptable if this is necessary to continue in-person instruction.
- **Regardless of the level of community transmission, schools that are already open can remain open for in-person instruction if they strictly adhere to mitigation strategies and have minimal impact to the school (e.g. few cases/outbreaks, adequate staff capacity, etc).**
- **Community Transmission** is assessed via case incidence, test positivity and secondary disease indicators. To find community transmission levels, please visit the [VDH School Indicators Dashboard](#).
- **School Impact** is assessed through outbreak data/information, student absenteeism and staff capacity AND/OR assessment of mitigation strategy implementation. Please see page 16 of the *Revised Interim Guidance for PreK-12 School Reopening* for more information.
- Hybrid or reduced attendance is intended to maximize opportunities for physical distancing between students and/or staff.