

SCHOOL REOPENING TOOLKIT

Social / Emotional Understanding

The purpose of the School Reopening Toolkit is to assist district leaders, school administrators, and school counselors in providing opportunities to support the well-being of school staff, and the social, emotional, physical, and academic well-being of students. The guidance in this document outlines important considerations for school reentry, continuity, and sustainability of social and academic supports for an in-person, virtual distance learning environment, or hybrid approach at the beginning of the school year or in response to a potential school closure. The intent of this document is to provide guidance while realizing every school is unique. Those most closely involved in decision making at the local level will make the most informed decisions regarding what is best for students.

Recommendations and Best Practices

District Level:

- The district has assessed current emergency response plans with local stakeholders, district-level leaders, and other agencies.
- The district has assembled, identified, reviewed, and updated existing processes for students, families, and staff to access health and wellness support services (i.e. coordinated school health, social worker, school-based mental health liaison, school nurse, McKinney- Vento liaison, and community mental and physical health agencies).
- The district has plans and personnel in place to lead professional development and guidance for educators to address the social, emotional, and mental well-being of students.
- The district has utilized a communication platform that provides school, district, and community level resources to support students and families (Translated in appropriate languages).
- The district has developed a communication plan to effectively support re-entry and reduce stigma (i.e. drafting and sharing key messages across several mediums).
- The district has developed a support services hotline and/or referral form to address additional needs. (Do we need to expand the bullying hotline to include other social/emotional issues?)
- The district has identified policies and procedures that adhere to FERPA, HIPPA, etc., on online and virtual platforms that aid in addressing mental well-being and wellness supports.
- The district has contacted additional identified community health and wellness organizations to provide supports.

- The district has identified and coordinated with potential community partners or other local resources that would be able to assist with district plans to support schools.
- The district has a plan to determine how students will have access to counseling services if the district is strictly working from a virtual platform or utilizing a blended option and inform parents/guardians about how to access those services for their students.
- The district has developed a protocol to address student crisis intervention in a distance learning setting.
- The district has detailed which counseling standards school(s) will focus on in the elementary, middle, and high school grade bands based on needs assessment and social/emotional screening data.
- The district has identified the professional learning needs of school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, etc. to facilitate online professional development opportunities.

School Administrators:

- The school administrators have reviewed emergency response plans and specific role(s) of each member on the crisis response team.
- The school administrators have identified the team member(s) who will be responsible for developing and implementing the school counseling/mental well-being plan.
- The school administrators have provided communication to faculty and staff members detailing how to access support services and resources.
- The school administrators have consulted with the counselor and wellness team on staff self-care supports and check-ins.
- The school administrators have devised a universal screening process to determine the social and emotional needs of all students. In the absence of formal screenings, school employed mental health professionals (i.e. school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, etc.) should establish regular informal check-ins with all students, especially in times of virtual learning.
- The school administrators have developed daily check-in platforms to communicate with staff on their well-being.
- The school administrators have developed a process to ensure all parent/guardian contact information (phone numbers and emails) is correct and up to date.
- The school administrators have considered administering student, faculty and parent/guardian needs assessments to facilitate appropriate focused interventions.

- The school administrators have developed communication plans to disseminate re-entry plan, support services options, and ways to access supports (i.e. home visit, online platforms, and paper).
- The school administrators may provide adequate crisis response training to all staff to support the well-being of all students.
- The school administrators have considered developing schedules and procedures to ensure school counselor availability to students and parents/guardians.
- The school administrators have determined a referral process for all students and school staff to refer students to school based counseling services.
- Schools have developed a communication plan with parents/guardians that include community resources, mental health resources, school counselor, and other school mental health support contact information.
- Schools have created a plan to communicate to parents and students regarding college and career readiness (College deadlines, ACT deadlines, etc).
- Schools have a working plan to work with feeder schools to plan transition activities.
- Schools have a plan to monitor school attendance and remain in contact with students who are unable to physically come to the school building even once school is open (i.e. medically vulnerable).

School Counselor:

- School Counselors have reviewed school discipline policy and discussed potential trauma implications (i.e. discipline, COVID stigma, neglect, racial inequities, grief, loss, etc.,) with school administration.
- School Counselors have worked alongside administration to develop a multi-tiered system of support to address adequate support services opportunities for students.
- School Counselors have worked alongside administration to develop strategies and supports for staff wellness (i.e. adult well-being support, tap in & tap out buddies, wellness rooms).
- School Counselors have provided teachers and staff adequate training that identifies potential trauma reactions.
- School Counselors have developed a communication template surveying the immediate needs of each family (i.e. family check-in form, online platforms, home visits, SMS options, paper communication methods).

- School Counselors have provided resources and strategies on how to talk with children about COVID related and social injustice issues involving families.
- School Counselors have provided teachers and staff resources outlining healing activities for all students (i.e. daily morning meetings, mental well-being platforms, and check- in/check-out).
- School Counselors have developed a list of families who may require a daily and weekly follow-up to determine if additional services and referrals are warranted. Special consideration should be given to adhering to privacy expectations mandated within FERPA guidelines.
- School Counselors have assessed current comprehensive school counseling model plans and identified areas of need to shift in online platforms.

Checklists by Grade Band

The bulleted checklists below identify items that should be considered to support the academic and emotional stability of students and be prioritized by districts, schools, and counselors. The checklists are not exhaustive but are intended to help prioritize and monitor the most important touchpoints.

Elementary Schools

- School administrators and counselors are working collaboratively to carefully place students in class based on academic, behavioral, and emotional needs with thought given to personalities of students and teachers. Has thought been given to extenuating circumstances for students during the time of possible closure, who may need special placement?
- Schools have a whole class counseling schedule that can be delivered in person or virtually detailing regularly scheduled class times.
- Counselors and/or administrators have created small groups that can meet in person or virtually to support emotional and behavioral needs.
- Schools have access to developmentally appropriate videos and resources to share with students and families.
- School faculty and personnel have a plan to greet students at the front door of the building to create a welcoming environment upon return to school.
- Teachers have a plan to be stationed outside classroom doors to welcome students each morning to create comfort and belonging for students.
- Schools have a plan “to keep eyes on students” while conducting school through virtual education such as regular video calls between teachers and/or counselors with the student. Providing opportunities for students to openly chat during some of these times may allow students the space to talk through any concerns or supports they may have.

Middle Schools

- Counselors and school leaders have worked with administration to schedule 6th Grade Early Opening Day for either in person or in virtual format. This day should include everything students need to know about the school, schedules and course offerings, clubs and extracurricular opportunities, supports, contact information, etc. prior to the start of school and social/emotional activities for student personal development.
- Rotating counselors have a plan to make sure incoming students have an individualized plan for student academic, social and emotional success.
- Counselors and school leaders have developed a way for all students to connect with adults on a consistent basis.
- Counselors and school leaders have developed an effective referral tool for educators who identify students in need (i.e. online referral form).
- Counselors will work with coaches and club sponsors to ensure students are informed about the extracurricular activities available at the school.
- Teachers have a plan to be stationed outside classroom doors to welcome students each morning to create comfort and belonging for students.

High School

- Counselors and school administrators have planned a schedule for 9th Grade Early Opening for either in person or in virtual format. This day should include everything students need to know about the school, schedules and course offerings, clubs and extracurricular opportunities, supports, contact information, etc. prior to the start of school and social/emotional activities for student personal development.
- Counselors and school administrators have examined class schedules to ensure no student has “gaps” in his/her schedule, as well as looked at class size numbers. Are class sizes balanced as much as feasibly possible?
- Counselors and school administrators have scheduled junior testing day to make up for missed testing on the ACT. Instructional methods are in place for how students are preparing for the ACT.
- Counselors and school administrators have devised ways for adults to connect with every student regularly.
- Counselors will work with student organizations such as Student Council to encourage students to become involved at school through athletics, clubs, honor societies, arts,

career and technical student organizations, or other opportunities to connect with peers as is possible and allowable for reintegration to high school. If working in a distance-learning format, consideration should be given to virtual meetings.

Rotating counselors have a plan to make sure incoming students have an individualized plan for student academic, social and emotional success.

Counselors and school administrators have developed an effective referral tool for educators who identify students in need.