Dear educators, families and students,

At every level, the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the delivery of education as we know it, forcing schools to become more innovative, nimble and responsive to the needs of students wherever they may be. The student-teacher relationship is a critically important element to the educational success and well-being of every child. COVID-19 forced us to adopt new practices and technologies at a rapid rate and confirmed what we all know to be true: no student learns the same way. Moving ahead, educators like never before, have an opportunity to combine the strengths of multiple delivery models, including technology, providing student voice and choice, while maintaining the foundation of education which is the student-teacher relationship.

Since March 13, 2020, educators, tribal leaders and other stakeholders engaged with the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI), the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) and the North Dakota Governor’s Office to respond to the closure of schools to in-person instruction due to COVID-19. On April 1, 2020, all public schools’ distance learning plans were approved for implementation. While school buildings were closed to students, essential staff continued to plan, serve and support the 121,000 public and non-public school students across the state of North Dakota.

With utmost gratitude, we recognize the monumental task accomplished this past spring in transitioning students to a distance learning model. This could only be done with the dedication and support of parents, teachers, leaders, communities and state partners. Schools continued to provide essential services such as meal delivery and, with the help of private sector partners, supply technology resources to enable distance learning.

Now as we look ahead to the 2020-2021 school year, North Dakota is positioned to re-open K-12 school buildings to in-person instruction because of our citizens’ commitment to following the ND Smart Restart guidance. We have not yet had to manage in-person teaching and learning for 121,000 K-12 students during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are entering new territory this fall as we serve a dual purpose to our state: the education of all students and safeguarding the health and safety of students, staff, families and communities.

Over the past several months education associations, tribal leaders, stakeholders and other partners have collaborated regarding reopening for the 2020-21 school year. A clear theme that emerged from these conversations was the need for timely guidance to aid in planning for a return to in-person instruction, delivery of services, resumption of extracurricular activities and other programs (including those provided within schools by external organizations). This guidance applies to all North Dakota public schools.

Given the dynamic nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, this guidance will evolve as further research, data and resources become available. North Dakota educators and administrators continue to care for their students, demonstrate passion for their profession and show vision for the future of our state. They have adapted, innovated, and proved that despite the adversities, they continue to build a strong future for North Dakota. We remain steadfastly committed to supporting and partnering with our schools as they work to provide a safe, quality educational experience for every North Dakota student.

Regards,

Doug Burgum
Governor

Kirsten Baesler
State Superintendent

Dr. Andrew Stahl
Interim State Health Officer
Table of Contents

I. Introductory Letter (Page 1)

II. Guiding Principals
   a. North Dakota assumptions
   b. North Dakota expectations for schools

III. Health and Safety Plans

IV. Phased Approach to In-Person Instruction

V. Color-coded Health Guidance System – Overview
   a. Changing Circumstances May Impact Color Designations
   b. Conditions for Resuming In-Person Instruction

VI. K-12 Smart Restart – Detailed
   a. Red/orange Phase
   b. Yellow Phase
   c. Green/Blue Phase

VII. Academic Support
   a. Academic Planning – District-Level Considerations
   b. Academic Planning – Classroom-Level Consideration

VIII. Considerations for Special Populations

IX. Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
   a. School-Wide Procedures
   b. Curriculum and Materials
   c. Classroom and Instruction
      i. Classroom Environment
      ii. Student Needs and Behaviors
   d. Adult Social Emotional Learning
      i. Adult Self-Care Needs
      ii. Supports Needed by Adults to Serve Students
   e. Family and Community Partnerships

X. Child Nutrition
   a. District Level Considerations
   b. School Level Considerations

XI. Assessment
   a. Guiding questions
   b. Summative Assessments
   c. Interim Assessments
   d. Formative or Diagnostic Assessments

XII. Funding
   a. ED Grant Funds for Employee Compensation and Cancelled Activities or Travel
   b. Overview of CARES Act Funding
   c. ESSER Overview

XIII. Resources
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

North Dakota maintains these assumptions:

● Schools will provide instruction in the fall and throughout the 2020-21 school year.
● COVID-19 may continue to spread throughout the school year.
● Every student will have the opportunity to engage in a full year of learning, irrespective of the spread of COVID-19 in a community.
● Depending upon local conditions, as reported by NDDoH and local public health units, instruction may be face-to-face, virtual, or a hybrid.
● Each district will work in collaboration with local health professionals (including local public health units), faculty, students, staff, and families.
● Each district will make decisions based on the most current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), current status of virus spread in and around the school community as reported by NDDoH and local public health units, and in the best interests of staff, students, and families.
● School boards will play a vital role as this unprecedented event unfolds. With the situation changing daily, good policies and best practices are as important as ever and the public is looking to their school district leadership teams to provide a unified message to employees, parents, students and the general public.
● Schools will take practical steps to mitigate the spread of the virus while continuing to focus on student learning.
● Schools are congregate settings. Congregate settings are known to increase transmissible moments and therefore, more susceptible to spreading COVID-19.
● Each district required to conduct tribal consultations under the Every Student Succeeds Act will work in collaboration with the tribal leadership.
● These guiding principles are not all-inclusive and are not intended as legal advice.

North Dakota expectations for schools:

● Schools will continue to be a safe environment for students, focusing on both social-emotional and physical health. Local decisions will be rooted in what is best for students.
● School districts should prioritize state guidance and utilize national recommendations as a guide.
● School administrators will make reasoned judgments to limit the spread of COVID-19.
● School administrators will work with their school boards, faculty, staff, and community to communicate decisions and data guiding those decisions.
● Health and Safety Plans will be approved by the district’s school board in consultation with local public health units. Those plans are published on the school’s publicly accessible website. Governor’s Executive Order 2020-38.
● Schools will have a school board approved Distance Learning Plan on file that includes all elements contained in the Governor’s Executive Order 2020-38. School districts can use their original Distance Learning Plan but will include new information required and improvements made. Those plans will be published on the school or district’s website.
● Schools will take into consideration a hybrid approach to in-person instruction along with distance learning to best meet the health and safety plans of all students and families.
● Schools will utilize the North Dakota High School Activities Association’s (NDHSAA) guidance for all decisions regarding school athletics, activities, and competitions.
Health and Safety Plans

Recognizing that each school district and individual building is unique and that all plans for the upcoming year must reflect local needs, each school district must create a Health and Safety Plan, which will serve as the local expectations for the phased approach to in-person instruction. The Health and Safety Plan should meet the needs of each school and must be created in consultation with local health professionals, faculty, staff, parents and students.

Health and Safety Plans must be approved by each school district’s school board (in the case of Fargo, the Board of Education) in consultation with local public health units. Those plans must also be published on the school or district’s publicly available website prior to the reopening of schools and providing services to students.

Non-public, private or parochial schools are strongly encouraged to create a Health and Safety Plan tailored to their needs and publish the Health and Safety Plan on their publicly available website prior to reopening.

Each district that is required to conduct tribal consultations under the Every Student Succeeds Act must consult with tribal leadership.

There are 15 residential education facilities in North Dakota. To ensure the maximum safety, health, and overall well-being of students, staff, and faculty in these situations, we encourage residential facility administrators to implement the North Dakota Department of Health’s recommendations for congregate settings whenever possible.

Phased Approach to In-Person Instruction Plan

RISK LEVEL

The K-12 Smart Restart has adopted the color-coded guidance in the ND Smart Restart Plan. This plan categorizes reopening into five phases: red, orange, yellow, green and blue. These designations signal how restrictions on school, work, congregate settings and social interactions will ease in each county. This color-coded guidance can be applied during the levels of ND Smart Restart to protect the health, bolster confidence and provide more security. It is likely that counties across the state could be in different phases based on multiple factors used to determine health guidance. Contact local public health unit for information.
Each level of guidance after red becomes progressively less restrictive. Every level protects public health and outlines the necessary mitigation strategies. Each level is guided by a rigorous measurement system, based on criteria such as the number of cases reported, positivity rates, testing capacity, hospital capacity, occurrence of point-source outbreaks, level of community spread, vulnerable populations affected and ability to protect, the availability of personal protection equipment (PPE), etc. North Dakotans should think of the guidance system as a dial that can be turned up or down by area based on the health risk.

**Red / Critical Risk** is the level with the highest disease burden and level of significant and uncontrolled community transmission, multiple outbreaks resulting in increased deaths, surge capacity of hospitals are threatened and there is lack of adequate PPE supplies available for healthcare workers. The most significant mitigation strategies are implemented at the Red / Critical Risk level.

**Orange / High Risk** is the level of significant transmission and high risk for exposure due to widespread community spread of infections. There are significant mitigation strategies emphasizing “Stay Home. Stay Healthy. Stay Connected.” Only essential travel and essential workforce, adherence to strict social distancing guidance, increased cleaning and disinfecting of bathrooms and high touch surfaces.

**Yellow Level/Moderate Risk** is the level of heightened exposure risk and transmission is controlled in these areas. Cases are reported but contained by rapid testing and robust contact tracing. Moderate social distancing and precautions are needed. Increased cleaning on high-touch surfaces and cleanings on shared spaces should be routine. Shared surfaces will be more frequently cleaned and disinfected. Case-based interventions will actively identify and isolate people with the disease and their contacts. All vulnerable individuals should continue to self-isolate and avoid large groups in public places. Those who are sick will be asked to stay home and seek testing for COVID-19.

**Green / Low Risk** for exposure or transmission, low case counts are reported, public health and private healthcare are ND Smart Restart able to safely diagnose, treat, and isolate COVID-19 cases and their contacts. Some physical distancing measures and limitations on gatherings will still be recommended to prevent transmission from accelerating again. For older adults (those over age 65), those with underlying health conditions, and other populations at heightened risk from COVID-19, continuing to limit time in the community will be important. State and community leaders should prepare health alerts, communicate risk and symptoms, review plans, prepare for public health capacity if needed for spikes in cases.

**Blue / New Normal** is when most normal activity can resume, with standard precautions and awareness of health guidelines such as routine hand washing, stay home when sick, cover your cough, education, stockpiling, planning, routine health alerts, etc. Monitoring for illness and outbreaks will continue. Even under new normal conditions, those found to be ill will be asked to self-isolate and contacts will be asked to remain at home.
Changing Circumstances May Impact Color Designations

Depending on the public health conditions, as reported by NDDoH, there could be additional actions, orders or guidance that is provided by NDDPI or NDDoH as a county is designated as red, orange, yellow, green or blue. Some counties may not experience a straight path from a red to a blue designation. Instead, cycling back and forth between less restrictive to more restrictive designations may occur as reported by local public health units. This means that each district should consult with local public health unit and account for changing conditions.

Conditions for Resuming In-Person Instruction

The CDC has released two documents to assist states and school districts in planning for a gradual scale-up and eventual reopening of schools: the Schools Decision Tree and the Interim Guidance for Schools and Day Camps. On June 30, 2020, the CDC published COVID-19 testing guidance for K12 schools related to SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19 and Considerations for Schools. These documents, along with guidelines from NDDoH and the North Dakota Smart Restart guidance provide the foundation for this guidance from North Dakota to allow local school boards in consultation with local public health units to measure and balance the risk of health and safety for students along with students overall social emotional educational experience. All documents will be updated, as needed, to reflect best practices.

K-12 Smart Restart

Red Phase/Orange Phase

Schools should remain closed for general in-person instruction. All instruction must continue via distance learning, whether using digital or non-digital platforms.

**DISTRICTS MUST:**

- **Health & Safety Plan**
  - Develop a written Health and Safety Plan in preparation to move into the yellow phase. The plan **must** be approved by each district’s school board in consultation with local public health unit and published on the school or district’s website.

- **Communication**
  - Plan for ensuring ongoing communication with families around the elements of the local Health and Safety Plan, including ways that families can practice safe hygiene in the home.

- **School Meals**
  - Consider provisions for student services such as school meal programs are highly encouraged to continue.
Schools may provide in-person instruction after developing a written Health and Safety Plan securing approval by each district’s school board in consultation with the local public health unit and publish the plan on the school or district’s website.

The elements for the plan in this phase are nearly identical to the green and blue phases. In this phase, school districts should be alert to the possibility of increased community spread and the need to transition to distance learning. This phase should emphasize facial coverings, personal hygiene and social distancing practices.

**PLAN MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:**

**COVID-19 Response Plan**
- Identification of a “COVID-19 coordinator” and/or “COVID-19 Team” with defined roles and responsibilities for health and safety preparedness and response planning.
- Identification of an individual at each school to be notified by public health of COVID-19 cases in the school setting. This position must also report cases of COVID-19 identified in the school setting, if notified prior to public health. This individual will need to be available evenings and weekends to respond to phone calls from public health. This position will assist public health in identifying and notifying close contacts in the school setting. This individual will be responsible for notifying the state superintendent of cases occurring in the school setting.
- Processes for monitoring students and staff for symptoms, history of exposure and absenteeism.
- Process to identify and protect children and staff at higher risk with an opportunity for continued distance teaching and learning.
- Process to rapidly notify parents and staff of exposures in the school setting.

**Positive or Close Contact**
- Train all faculty and staff on the implementation of the Health and Safety Plan.
- Train all faculty and staff on appropriate use and wearing of facial coverings.
- Plan for ensuring ongoing communication with families around the elements of the local Health and Safety Plan, including ways that families can practice safe hygiene in the home.

**Communication & Training**
- Facial coverings (masks or face shields) should be worn by staff and students when social distancing is not possible.
- Guidelines for hygiene practices for students and staff which include the manner and frequency of hand-washing and other best practices.
- Protocols for cleaning, sanitizing, disinfecting, and ventilating learning spaces, surfaces, and any other areas used by students (e.g., restrooms, drinking fountains, hallways, and transportation).

**Hygiene & Cleaning**
- Protocols for classroom/learning space occupancy that allow for separation among students and staff throughout the day to the maximum extent feasible (e.g., A/B days, A/B weeks, ½ days, cohorts of smaller groups, consistent student groups, etc.).
- Protocols for the use of cafeterias, commons areas and other congregate settings for students, faculty and staff.
- When weather permits, utilization of outdoor spaces is recommended.

**Physical Distancing**
- Protocols for limiting the sharing of materials among students to the maximum amount feasible.
- Protocols for identifying and restricting non-essential visitors and volunteers.
- Protocols for adjusting space occupancy on buses that allow for separation among students to the maximum extent feasible.
Schools may provide in-person instruction after developing a written Health and Safety Plan securing approval by each district’s school board in consultation with the local public health unit and publish the plan on the school or district’s website.

**PLAN MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:**

### COVID-19 Response Plan
- Identification of a “COVID-19 coordinator” and/or “COVID-19 Team” with defined roles and responsibilities for health and safety preparedness and response planning.
- Identification of an individual at each school to be notified by public health of COVID-19 cases in the school setting. This position must also report cases of COVID-19 identified in the school setting, if notified prior to public health. This individual will need to be available evenings and weekends to respond to phone calls from public health. This position will assist public health in identifying and notifying close contacts in the school setting. This individual will be responsible for notifying the state superintendent of cases occurring in the school setting.
- Processes for monitoring students and staff for symptoms, history of exposure and absenteeism.
- Process to identify and protect children and staff at higher risk with an opportunity for continued distance teaching and learning.
- Process to rapidly notify parents and staff of exposures in the school setting.

### Positive or Close Contact
Include the NDDoH protocols for:
- Process for isolation and quarantine when a staff member, student, or visitor becomes sick or demonstrates a history of exposure.
- Guidelines for when an isolated or quarantined staff member, staff, or visitor may return to school.

### Communication & Training
- Train all faculty and staff on the implementation of the Health and Safety Plan.
- Train all faculty and staff on appropriate use and wearing of facial coverings.
- Plan for ensuring ongoing communication with families around the elements of the local Health and Safety Plan, including ways that families can practice safe hygiene in the home.

### Hygiene & Cleaning
- Guidelines for hygiene practices for students and staff which include the manner and frequency of hand-washing and other best practices.
- Guidelines for when facial coverings should be worn by staff and students when social distancing is not possible.
- Protocols for cleaning, sanitizing, disinfecting, and ventilating learning spaces, surfaces, and any other areas used by students (e.g., restrooms, drinking fountains, hallways, and transportation).

### Physical Distancing
- Protocols for classroom/learning space occupancy that allow for separation among students and staff throughout the day to the maximum extent feasible (e.g., A/B days, A/B weeks, ½ days, cohorts of smaller groups, consistent student groups, etc.).
- Protocols for the use of cafeterias, commons areas and other congregate settings for students, faculty and staff.
- When weather permits, utilization of outdoor spaces is recommended.

### Additional Safety Measures
Plan should include the following to the extent possible:
- Protocols for limiting the sharing of materials among students to the maximum amount feasible.
- Protocols for identifying and restricting non-essential visitors and volunteers.
- Protocols for adjusting space occupancy on buses that allow for separation among students to the maximum extent feasible.
Learning is the primary purpose of schools, and the ability to resume place-based academic activities is essential to a school district’s system recovery. The resumption of in-person teaching and learning begins to restore normalcy to the school environment, which can be very important to the psychological and emotional health of students, educators, staff, and administrators.

When developing school district building re-entry plans, districts should use these guiding questions and resources to develop programs, systems, and supports to address the unique needs of each school community. Districts are encouraged to establish a planning team in collaboration with community partners to consider how the school district will approach re-entry.

More information and guidance on restart service to students with disabilities, compensatory education and Extended School Year can be found at NDDPI Covid-19 Updates and Guidance Special Education.

### Academic Planning - District-Level Considerations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Has the district solicited feedback from stakeholders regarding effective strategies of communication and methods of instruction?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Has the district evaluated the effectiveness of district technology resources such as LMS, collaboration and communication tools?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Has the district explored strategies to help students and educators learn remotely, in the event of future restructuring or disruptions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Has the school board approved policies and reviewed new operating procedures to respond to future disruptions to building access?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What options for new configurations might the district consider due to social distancing guidelines? (Examples to explore are blended learning, staggered reopening, alternate days (A/B day, a.m./p.m. rotation, etc.), scheduling options, class size, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How will the district provide additional support for student learning and transition? (Examples to explore: “Acceleration Academies”, or “Jump Starts” for the 2020-2021 school year, summer programming, extended school day, before/after school programming, tutoring, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How can the district rethink the use of staff that do not have classroom responsibilities to support student re-entry and meeting individual student needs? (Examples to explore: paraprofessionals, specialists, support staff, administration, counselors, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What planning needs to occur in order to meet the needs of courses with large populations and/or having close contact? (Examples to explore: physical education, band, choir, extra curriculars, CTE, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. What does the re-entry plan for the district staff look like (educators, staff, administration, paraprofessionals, etc.)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. What planning needs to occur to ensure continuation of the identification of students for additional support such as IEP/504s, English learners, levels of service, etc.?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Academic Planning - District-Level Considerations**

### Special Considerations for Specific Populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How will the district sustain processes of identification of students needing specialized supports? [Examples to explore: students with health concerns or special needs, those experiencing homelessness, gifted, those living in poverty or foster care, English learners, migrant children, newly enrolled students, prekindergarten children, etc.] How will the district ensure it is meeting the needs of the specific populations of these students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How will the district ensure it is meeting the needs of students with special needs and those requiring accommodations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Has the district identified subpopulations of students needing specialized supports? How are these needs being identified and met? [Examples to explore: students living in poverty, special education, 504, English learners, new enrollees, Title I, health concerns, migrant, gifted, homeless, prekindergarten, etc.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What supports or interventions are provided to those students who were not responsive to the distance learning instructional model?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How will educational support be provided to vulnerable populations that continue to be high risk (or have family members who are high risk) and cannot physically reconvene? What might this alternate education programming look like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How will policies and the system support educational staff that fall into a vulnerable population? [Examples to explore: allowing them to teach remotely and utilizing larger classroom space where social distancing can be maintained.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What accommodations will be made for students or staff who are required to quarantine due to exposure or potential exposure?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Family & Community Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What strategies will the district take to build and/or maintain connections with families and the community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How will the district communicate and support families who are unable to communicate in English (or whose native language is other than English)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Academic Planning - Classroom-Level Considerations

### Relationships, Connections, and Transitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How will the school intentionally plan staff connections with students? What regular, frequent interactions can be facilitated between educators and students? [Examples to explore: mentoring, advisory time, group sessions, etc.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What frameworks exist for educators to monitor how students are readjusting to school? How will they readily identify those having difficulty? What student-centered supports can be provided to aid those with minor adjustment problems? What specialized assistance may be needed for those who have major adjustment problems?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Based on the distance learning experience, what classroom practices might be obsolete? What new practices are promising or have contributed to learning? [Examples to explore: meaningful feedback on student learning, active student engagement, etc.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How will the district determine if students excelled or fell behind during distance learning? [Examples to explore: formative and summative diagnostic assessments, screeners, progress monitoring tools, etc.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How will student progress continue to be measured? How will this be communicated with fellow educators? [Examples to explore: special education, Title I, EL, other specialists, consecutive grade levels or subject areas, etc.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How will these results inform student-centered approaches to instruction and learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How will distance learning experiences influence change in current assessment practices?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Special Considerations for Specific Populations

**Guiding Questions**

1. What interventions are in place for all students? What interventions are in place for struggling students? What interventions are in place for vulnerable populations? Where do gaps exist?
2. What is the individualized intervention plan for each student? How will focused individual education be provided, especially for vulnerable populations? (Examples to explore: curricular tools, enhanced learning opportunities, support to address unfinished learning, supports for early grade reading, supports for students with specific needs, emotional, behavioral, and mental health screeners and services, etc.)

## Family and Community Engagement

**Guiding Questions**

1. What communication tools exist for educators to stay connected with families? Where are they effective? How will these resources be used to share information about school programming and expectations?
2. How can each classroom support parents with continued student learning? What tips and instruction strategies can be given to families?

## Considerations for Special Populations

Despite the many pressing stressors placed on special education professionals and families during the pandemic, countless programs, schools, and districts have actively strived to serve students with disabilities amid closures. As North Dakota begins to live with the presence of the COVID-19 virus, planning for the upcoming year has begun. No plan to reopen can succeed without the input and partnership of the family, school and community.

Schools and districts should consider how alternative schedules, extended periods of remote learning and intermittent school closure may impact the delivery of services for students receiving special education services. Schools and districts need to ensure students have meaningful and effective access to the general education environment and instruction. Least restrictive environment (LRE) should be central to decision making. Below are questions and potential risk factors to guide planning:
## Guiding Questions

1. How will schools and districts ensure students with disabilities understand new expectations, such as social distancing?

2. How will schools and districts ensure social distancing expectations are met across all special education environments?

3. How will schools and districts ensure backlogged IEP meetings, initial evaluations, reevaluations and special education referrals are implemented in a timely manner?

4. How will schools make data driven instructional decisions, including recoupment of unfinished learning during the distance learning period for students with disabilities?

5. How will schools and districts ensure that special education evaluations and reevaluations continue without interruption?

6. How will schools and districts allow reasonable time for special education staff to collect data on students with disabilities’ present levels of performance in order to determine the impact on progress that occurred during COVID?

7. How will schools and districts ensure students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) are provided a free, appropriate public education?

8. How will schools and districts ensure students with developmental challenges or those who are medically fragile are kept safe while in the school building?

9. How will schools and districts ensure individualized contingency plans meet students’ needs when instruction needs to take place through an alternative learning situation (i.e. alternate schedules, periods of distance learning)?

10. How will schools and districts ensure that students with disabilities have meaningful and effective access to general education and instruction?

11. How will schools and districts accommodate social distancing requirements while providing services to students who require 1:1 assistance and supervision?

12. How will schools and districts ensure students who struggle with transitions are successful during sudden disruptions in routines and schedules?

13. How will schools and districts ensure all IEP teams and educators have access to assessments, supports and instructional supports to meet individual student’s assistive technology needs?

14. How will students who participate in work work-based or community learning experiences transition into environments?

15. How will schools and districts plan for positive behavior interventions and supports to be in place and clearly communicated to all staff before students return?

16. How will schools and districts ensure staff and other students are kept safe when responding to a student’s escalated or aggressive behaviors?

17. How will schools and districts make sure students who utilize sensory spaces (trampolines, squeeze machines, swings, etc.) will be free to use them when needed?

18. How will schools and districts ensure shared sensory space equipment is properly sanitized as each student uses the equipment?

### Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

SEL is the process through which youth and adults identify and regulate emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain meaningful relationships, and make responsible decisions. SEL provides a teaching and learning process where youth and adults develop the necessary skills and attitudes that help them to engage in learning more successfully, build supportive relationships, engage civically, and have positive mental health. Thus, SEL provides a foundation for all students to thrive, where some students may need additional support (tier two and tier three) to achieve positive mental health.
Considerations have been made for what is appropriate for all, some, or a few, based on the unique experiences of how people experienced the pandemic, recognizing that each student possesses a unique combination of skills and environments which influence their development and well-being. Stakeholder layers include staff, students, families, and the community at large.

### School-Wide Procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Who will serve as the school lead for SEL? Mental/behavioral health services?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Which data will inform decisions regarding social-emotional needs of stakeholders?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How will the district ensure the mental health and well-being/promote self-care for staff?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How will the district ensure that school counselors are only being asked to do what they are trained for? (Example: school counselors may do short term counseling or small group counseling but should NOT be doing long-term counseling.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How will the district ensure coordination and collaboration between counselors, social workers, teachers and other staff?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How will counseling and/or psychological first aid be provided for those that need it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How is the district ensuring that ALL STAFF (certified and classified staff) are prepared to be aware of students’ social and emotional well-being?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What long-term plans will the district have for social emotional recovery as a result of the disruption to the regular routine? (For some, it may take months or years to recover.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Curriculum and Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What instructional curriculum/supplements are available to explicitly teach social and emotional competencies? To integrate with content domains? What is the evidence surrounding those materials, and for whom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What instructional curriculum/supplements are needed to explicitly teach student social and emotional competencies? To integrate with content domains?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How will the school district balance the social and emotional needs of youth to engage in learning with academic learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What additional resources for SEL are needed?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Classroom and Instruction

#### Classroom Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What classroom routines and procedures are in place/can be integrated to support SEL needs in the classroom? (Ex. classroom meetings and classroom management strategies.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do routines and procedures need to be modified to maintain physical safety and psychological safety while developing empathy and compassion for others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What instructional practices support SEL in the classroom (ex. classroom discussions, cooperative learning, and assessment and feedback)? How might those practices need to be modified per health and safety guidelines?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How will teachers create a calm and supportive environment for students?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guiding Questions

1. How will school district leaders help students reconnect with their peers in a learning environment? Socially? With their teachers? What will that look like in the “new normal”? (Especially for students that are more introverted.)
2. How will teachers be prepared to address a potential increase in anxiety, PTSD, etc. as a result of the disruption to the students’ regular routine?
3. How will teachers be prepared to handle a potential increase in student behavioral issues as a result of the disruption to the students’ regular routine?
4. How will teachers address potential bullying related to stigma associated with COVID-19 (ex. individuals who are sick (COVID-19 or other) and return to school, general coughing/sneezing, ethnicity, etc.)?
5. How will staff members identify students that may need immediate counseling?
6. How will the teachers assure that students are able to reconnect socially with their peers? (Especially students that are more introverted.)

Guiding Questions

1. What types of supports do staff (certified and classified) need to reengage in the working environment? To feel physically and psychologically safe?
2. What types of school structures need to be put into place to support adults’ social and emotional development?
3. How will the school district ensure that adults are modeling good social and emotional competencies?
4. What employee assistance programs will be available for staff members experiencing mental health issues as a result of the COVID-19 situation?

Guiding Questions

1. What types of training do adults need to fully support students? To identify signs of trauma and grief in students?
2. What types of school structures do adults need to fully support students?
3. How do we create an environment in which adults feel connected and engaged with one another? With their students? With the families?

Guiding Questions

1. How will the school district ascertain what helps stakeholders feel safe at school?
2. What partnerships are needed/available to support student needs? Staff?
3. How will the school district ensure stakeholders are informed and accounted for in the decision-making process?
4. How will the school district provide emotional support to students and families that might have been directly impacted by COVID-19 (they or someone they know tested positive, had health issues, etc.)?
5. How will the school provide emotional support to students and families that have experienced non-health related impacts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic? (For example, job loss, increase in domestic violence, etc.)

How will immediate, short-term, and long-term counseling options and outside referrals be addressed?

Guiding Questions

Through school closures, summer breaks, and re-opening, school nutrition programming remains a crucial support to students and families by providing meal services in normal and uncertain times. Districts should build on the experiences of the spring school closures in 2020 to inform strategies on how to ensure continuity of meal services through new and evolving contexts.
As districts map out goals for what school will look like in the upcoming academic year, these guiding questions and resources may be used to inform decisions related to how school nutrition may continue to meet student needs in a variety of settings, especially when students are unable to get meals. More school nutrition information is available on our website.

**District-Level Considerations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What training do school foodservice staff need before school starts? Have staff been trained on proper foodservice sanitation techniques, alternative serving models, food safety requirements, proper use of personal protective equipment, and social distancing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Has the district communicated with local and state health departments to ensure schools are adhering to the latest food service guidelines? Districts should familiarize themselves with the safety and operation guidelines from the North Dakota Dept. of Health - Food and Lodging for all statewide food service industries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What strategies are in place for alternative serving models that promote social distancing and reduce contact? These may include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Serving meals in the cafeteria (at reduced occupancy levels, consistent with statewide guidelines) with:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Spaced serving lines (marked on floors);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Spaced seating (use outdoor space as practicable and appropriate); and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Longer meal periods for more staggered meal delivery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Classroom service/classroom dining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Are necessary supplies available to ensure that schools are prepared to operate alternative serving models (i.e., serving meals in the classroom, disposable food service items)? Have supply needs been communicated with distributors?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Have food service operations coordinated with teachers and administrators?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Are menus developed that adhere to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) meal pattern regulations that do not rely on students self-serving (i.e., salad bar) items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What meal service contingency plans are in place for remote learning scenarios? Establish procedures and protocols to ensure students have access to school meals during unanticipated school closures. School Districts should include at a minimum the following topics:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Procurement of food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Food distribution options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Staffing and volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What guidelines are in place regarding food from home (i.e. classroom celebrations, guardians dropping off food during the school day for individual student consumption)? Note: this is not meant to regulate food from home in student lunch boxes for individual student consumption. Policies concerning outside food brought into the building and any restrictions on outside persons during the meal service should be communicated with families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Have you communicated with households regarding program changes between meal service during school closures and the new school year including families which received meals at no cost and will not be eligible when school starts without applying for free or reduced-price meal benefits?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. What is the district’s plan for disseminating information regarding free or reduced-price meal benefits, including supports available to assist families in completing forms?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. How will this information be provided to families that don’t speak English as a first language and/or with disabilities?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Assessment

Many different assessments are administered throughout a typical school year and each has a slightly different intent or reasoning behind it. The purpose of this section is to share information on the different types of assessments, as well as share suggestions and resources for schools to consider when planning re-entry.

Research indicates that learning gaps will be widened and more prevalent due to the effects of COVID-19 on instruction. Assessments can be used to help identify learning gaps; however, it is suggested that in the event not all learning gaps can be addressed, a prioritization of target gaps and instruction should be utilized to realign the student on a grade level path. Creating or administering an assessment that is closely aligned to target gaps or essential standards is a suggested practice. Assessments that are specific, can be administered in a timely fashion, and provide valuable/instant feedback for teachers will be most beneficial in finding and addressing learning gaps. More assessment information is available on our website.

### Guiding Questions

1. Is there an assessment plan in place to help identify students’ academic level and to help identify learning gaps and drive instruction?
2. Does the assessment plan include the use of interim and formative assessments or screeners?
3. Will an assessment or pre-assessment be administered within the first weeks of school?
4. Does the assessment plan concentrate on informing instruction rather than larger scale evaluation outcomes or prediction of predetermined goals?
5. Do the assessments that are planned for the upcoming school year concentrate on diagnosing academic, cognitive, or social-emotional strengths and weaknesses and provide timely, yet useful, instructional information?
6. In the event instruction is conducted via distance learning or a hybrid model, does this modify how students will be assessed?
7. Does the assessment plan account for unique needs of students?
8. Are teachers prepared to use the information and data from your planned assessments and able to adjust curriculum accordingly?

### Summative Assessments

Out of three groups of assessments discussed in this section, summative assessments are the least helpful in a re-entry situation, as they do not provide a detailed source of diagnostic information to help drive instruction. Experts are discouraging the use of standardized summative assessments to be given upon re-entry (i.e., administering the Spring NDSA of 2020 during the Fall of 2020). Summative assessments serve a valid role in education; however, when it comes to identifying and targeting learning gaps with timely feedback, there are better solutions. Instruction time is a valuable resource and is best not to be used on a standardized, summative assessment. The plan for standardized, summative assessments for the upcoming (2020-2021) school year are not yet determined. Information will be shared as details become available.
Interim Assessments
There is a strong possibility that useful information can be gleaned from previously administered interim assessments. Administering an early interim assessment in the beginning of the school year is becoming an expert-based suggested practice. Ideally, if multiple interim assessments were administered in the previous school year, administering an additional interim assessment in the fall could help identify problem areas for an entire group of students. This could also reveal trend data on specific concepts or areas that need to be re-taught. Other interim assessments such as semester exams or unit tests may also provide beneficial information.

Formative or Diagnostic Assessments
Formative assessments typically offer immediate feedback, can be given quickly, and are generally specific in meeting the differentiated needs of students. This type of assessment can play a vital role in identifying specific learning gaps of each individual student. A priority should be placed on guidance for using, creating, selecting, administering, and interpreting key formative assessments in the early stages of the upcoming school year. There are two main types of formative assessments; formal and informal. Below are examples of each type of assessments.

Presentations or debates
Formal
- Textbook/teacher created unit test
- Textbook/teacher created chapter or section test
- Grades, results, scores from previous school year
- Any teacher created test/online test (standards based)
- Assessments given within instructional/support programs (DLM, Read Right, MyFoundations Lab, MyACT, etc.)

Informal
- Quizzes, oral Q/A, flashcards
- Student self-evaluation
- Pair and Share with classmate
- Brainstorming or Brain dump
- KWL Chart
- Sticky note response to question on board
- Mastery checklist of concepts/standards from previous grade

Funding
The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided an economic stimulus to individuals, businesses, and schools. Under ESSER Fund authority, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) will award grants for the purpose of providing Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) with emergency relief funds to address the impact the Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools across the state.

The federal government has recognized the need for funding K-12 education during and after the times of this current COVID-19 pandemic. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided an economic stimulus to individuals, businesses, and schools.

Considering COVID-19, below is the most recent information we have about:
- Use of U.S. Department of Education (ED) grant funds for employee compensation and cancelled activities or travel,
- CARES Act funding, and
- Waivers of certain fiscal requirements.
LEAs should make informed and strategic decisions about the use of available funds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ED Grant Funds for Employee Compensation and Cancelled Activities or Travel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As authorized by the federal Office of Management and Budget, on April 8, 2020, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) offered relief in two key areas as described in this fact sheet.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overview of CARES Act Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) was signed into law on March 27, 2020. It includes two grant programs to help educational entities prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER), and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESSER Overview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under ESSER Fund authority, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) will award grants for the purpose of providing Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) with emergency relief funds to address the impact that Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools across the state. The use of funds under this program are broad and flexible, consistent with the federal government’s goal of preventing, preparing for, and responding to COVID-19. For more information including district allocations and FAQ, visit <a href="https://www.nd.gov/dpi/esser-funding">https://www.nd.gov/dpi/esser-funding</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDGAR and UGG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESSER funds are subject to both the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) and the Uniform Grant Guidance (UGG).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resources

More information on school restart guidance can be found here.