

Recommendations for the Practical, Fair, and Safe Reopening of Public Schools K-12 in the State of Texas



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CookChildren's.

Disclosures

Dr. Mazade has **no direct financial interests** in any products or services related to this presentation.

Objectives

- Describe ways in which transmission of COVID-19 occurs, the incubation period and the period of infectivity of the SARS 2 coronavirus, and how to limit transmission within the school setting.
- Point others to resources to help guide the safest participation in extracurricular activities, following the early dismissal of the 2018-2019 school year resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19: What we know

COVID-19 (also known as SARS-2 CoV) is a pandemic, communicable disease characterized by a variety of symptoms.

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Muscle/body aches
- Headache
- Loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

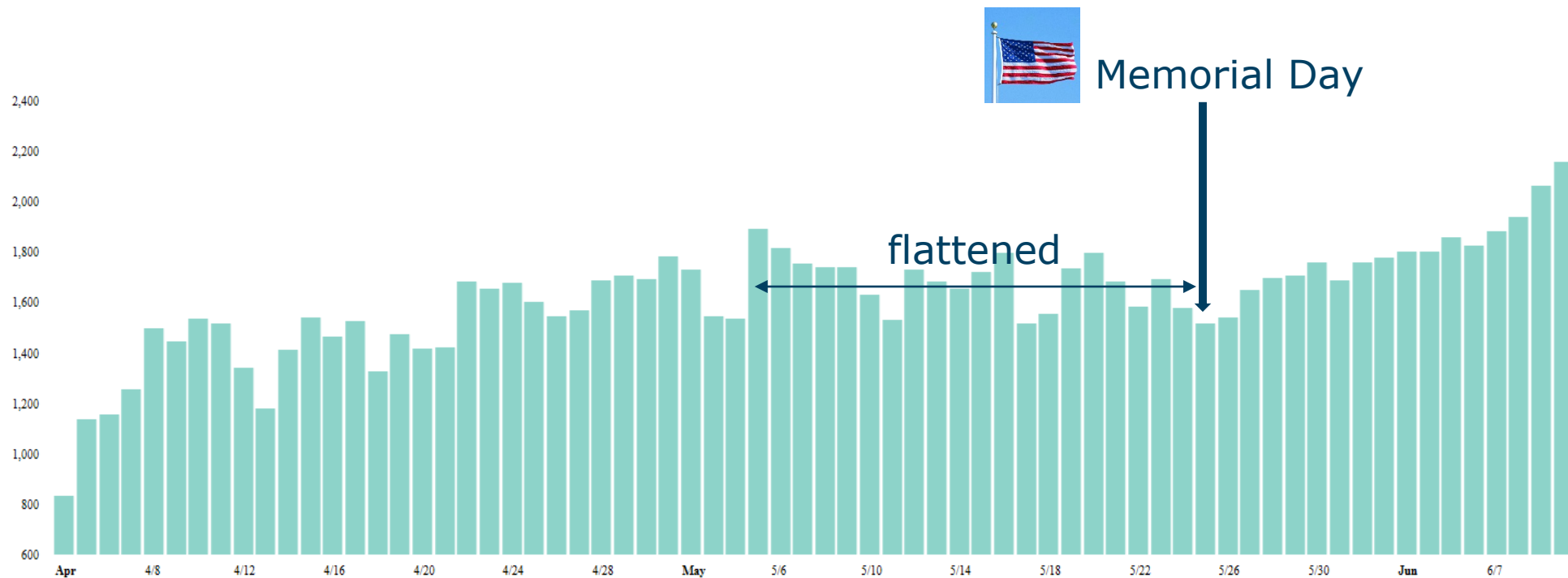
Transmission of COVID-19 occurs when:

- The virus lands on the surface of the eyes, nose, or mouth, or is breathed into the lungs of a susceptible person.
- Contact occurs with infectious secretions or body fluids that are then transmitted by contaminated hands to the eyes, nose or mouth.

COVID-19: What we know *(cont.)*

- It may take **up to 14 days** to develop symptoms **following exposure to COVID-19.**
- **Infectious virus can be transmitted starting from 2-3 days prior to the onset of symptoms and for about 10 days after the onset of symptoms.**
- **K-12 students tend to tolerate infection better than adults, especially elderly people.**
- **Cook Children's prescreening of asymptomatic children preparing to have a medical procedure identified around 1% children of all ages shedding the virus locally**

Hospitalized Texans with COVID-19

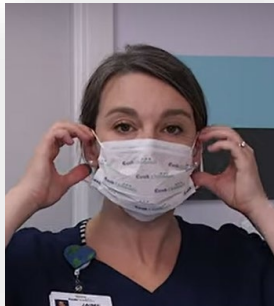


Protection from COVID-19

- Cloth masks



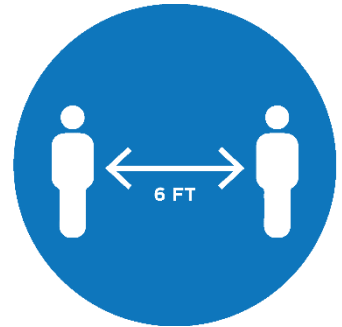
- Medical masks



- N-95 masks



- Maintaining distances of 6 feet or more from other people



Public health authorities

School officials contact public health authorities regarding current local levels of COVID-19 transmission for applying the recommendations

Three levels of COVID-19 community transmission (CDC)*

- None to Minimal
- Minimal to Moderate
- Substantial

*CDC. Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission, Table 3.
Potential mitigation strategies for public health functions. March 12, 2020.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community-mitigation-strategy.pdf>

Health education

Health education for all school employees, parents and students should discuss:

- COVID-19 transmission
- Instruction and demonstration of proper hand hygiene
- Cough etiquette.



Materials should be available in English and Spanish.

Signage should reinforce education and ample opportunities for hand-washing or use of alcohol-based hand rubs should exist.

Health education *(cont.)*

Health education for all school employees, parents and students should include:

- Instruction of students to **use alcohol-based hand rubs** after contacting high-touch surfaces;
- Teaching students to try to **avoid touching their faces**; and
- **Integrate the impact of healthcare epidemiology**, public health systems, emergency management, and supply chain management in school curricula to **encourage students to examine these careers**.

Enhanced environmental hygiene

Schools should implement enhanced environmental hygiene practices including:

- **Cleaning facilities daily** with commonly available safe and approved commercial disinfectants
- Using **disinfecting wipes to clean commonly shared equipment**, like computer lab, work stations, etc.
- Waiting for cleaned surfaces to dry before reuse
- Regularly disinfecting bathrooms, door handles, and all high-touch surfaces



Returning from breaks

For the purposes of mitigating transmission of COVID-19 from returning travelers **all** schools to follow precautions **as if** located in a community with sustained transmission of COVID-19, for the first 24 days* following the return from:

- summer break
- a major travel holiday
- major school break.

**Twenty-four days includes an incubation period of up to 14 days to develop infection and up to 10 days beyond that to spread infectious virus either symptomatically or asymptotically.*



School schedules

School schedules that attempt social distancing by reducing the number of students on-campus, such as attending on alternate days, is **discouraged**.

The following considerations should be weighed before proposing such schedules because they can create:

- **Financial hardships** for single parent families or for families in which both parents must work outside the home;
- **Misaligned schedules** for large families decreasing parent financial productivity; and
- Opportunities for unsupervised teenagers to **engage in high-risk social behaviors**, such as vaping and engaging in sex.

Students who are ill or become ill

Students who are ill should NOT attend school. If a student becomes ill while at school, they should:

- Wear face covering at school if not already doing so **AND** if not medically contraindicated
- Wait for parents to arrive away from other students who are well, such as the nurse's office

Students with possible or proven COVID-19 diagnosis should be allowed to return to school when they have met criteria issued by national and state guidance.

School nurses

The following guidance for school nurses is recommended.

- **Medical masks and eye protection should be worn** when evaluating and providing care for students.
 - If available, gowns and gloves may provide further protection.
- Consistently **practice good hand hygiene**.
- **Disinfect spaces** where ill students have been evaluated.
- **Utilize screens** to separate ill students.



School nurses *(cont.)*

- **Avoid nebulization therapy**, which is considered an aerosol generating procedure.
 - **If nebulization therapy is required:**
 - **Other ill students should be relocated;** and
 - Nurses should **use goggles and wear N-95 masks, gowns, and gloves** during nebulization therapy.
- **Receive targeted education** regarding signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and **be apprised of the newest COVID-19 precautions** for health care workers.

Absentee policies

As districts develop and adopt absentee policies surrounding illness-related absenteeism, such policies should be:

- **More lenient** during periods of **mild to moderate and sustained local COVID-19 transmission**.

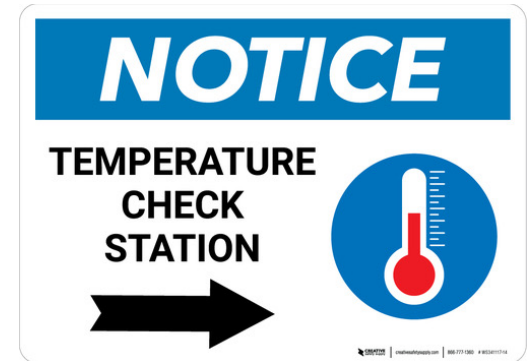
This is due to the established duration of transmission of COVID-19 from sick individuals of up to 10 days after the onset of symptoms.

Temperature screenings

Despite advocacy for **school entry temperature screenings** of students and faculty at school entrances, this **practice has not proven to be effective**.

Why? Because of variable accuracy due to technique and equipment.

IF temperature screenings are performed, do so in a manner that avoids students standing in lines to be screened.



Face coverings

The following guidance for face coverings in the classroom and at schools is recommended:

For Kindergarten and early elementary school students, face coverings (or masks) should be **limited to walking in lines in halls** and **bus riding**.

- **Why?** For this age group:
 - Expectations of low compliance;
 - Language development is important; and
 - The contribution of to the transmission of COVID-19 has not been well-established.



Face coverings *(cont.)*

For all other students, visitors, and school employees, face coverings should be worn on campus and buses, where COVID-19 transmission is sustained and social distancing cannot be maintained.

For students with developmental delays, autism, and special needs, the need for face coverings should be examined individually.



Do not punish or exclude students for failing to wear a face covering correctly or at all.

- Explain the potential for asymptomatic transmission to others.

Face coverings *(cont.)*

Face coverings should not be used where there is a risk of burn or injury, such as in chemistry labs.

A physician note should not be required for a student to attend class either with or without a face covering.

Face coverings should not be lowered when communicating directly with one another, particularly in noisy environments.

- Teach students and faculty to “TALK LOUDER, DON’T LOWER!”

Cafeterias

If social distancing is not possible, school cafeterias should prepare and distribute sack or box lunches for students to eat in homerooms or outside.

If social distancing is possible during meals, students not be avoid standing in lines for lunch service or congregating without face coverings.

In addition, use of paper cups and personal bottles is preferred over use of water fountains.



Sports and sporting events

Athletes should use of **athletic neck gaiters** that can pulled up to cover the face and nose during possible COVID-19.

- *Exception: When their use would present an unacceptable injury*
- *hazard to the athlete.*

Cheer squads should designate a single caller with a microphone when practicing and performing.



Athletes should **practice hand hygiene**. In gyms or practice areas, signs should remind students to **use disinfecting wipes to clean exercise and weight equipment** before moving to another station.

Dance and color guard squads should practice social distancing when performing wherever they are and avoid sharing equipment.

Sports and sporting events *(cont.)*

At sporting events, the following guidance is recommended:

- **Ticket sales should be limited** to immediate family members of participants.
- **Social distancing of spectators** should be encouraged.
- **Sideline staff should be limited** to essential personnel.
- Concessions should be easy to distribute quickly; so **lines are kept to a minimum.**



More specific guidance has been offered by the CDC* in regard to youth sports.

*Considerations for Youth Sports. CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html>

Music

Choir rehearsals should not resume due to high transmission rates between grouped singers.

Indoor wind and brass instrument rehearsals should not resume until more information is available about transmission.

Outdoor wind and brass instrument rehearsals can resume with social distancing recommendations for bands.*

Band choreography, drumline, and color guard spacing should take into consideration social distancing recommendations and wearing face coverings when unable to maintain social distance and when not performing.



*COVID-19 Summer Marching Band Practices & Rehearsals. UIL. <https://www.uiltexas.org/music/covid-19-information>

Classroom arrangement, use of large spaces, and assemblies

Classrooms should be **arranged to maximize social distancing**.

Large spaces, where social distancing can be practiced, should be **used for meetings and proctored testing**.

Microphones should be utilized during question and answer sessions.

All assembly content should be broadcast to homerooms.



Distance learning

Online school for **immunosuppressed students to learn** and **immunosuppressed faculty to teach** should be increased.

Online accommodations should be examined **for students who are quarantined**.



Preparations should be made in the event of an **abrupt return to distance learning**.

On-campus or alternative site video education for students in home situations that cannot support distance learning should be available.

Special education teachers should be proactively engaged to **accommodate students with special needs** in distance learning activities.

Play and social times

It is important that students **play** for their **physical, social, and psychological** development.

Wash toys frequently.

Wipe down handles on play equipment, swings, etc. with sanitary wipes frequently.



Hunger

Lack of access to food continues to be a major issue during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Educate teachers and parents regarding signs that students may be starving, such as:

- Asking about food frequently;
- Hoarding food and snacks to eat later or share with siblings;
- Being inattentive or hyperactive;
- Having emotional swings; and
- Having a noticeable change in appearance.



Schools should provide lists of resources for families in need*.

*Assistance finding a variety of services is available through the Department of Texas Health and Humans Services.

<https://www.211texas.org/>

Emotional and mental health

Students are dealing with extremes of anxiety, frustration, isolation, and uncertainty during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following student behaviors could be a sign of these emotions:

- Acting out or withdrawing
- Showing diminished performance
- Displaying anger and frustration
- Self-medicating

Increase staffing to provide emotional and mental health support to students.

Child maltreatment

Child maltreatment has reached epidemic proportions during these extremely difficult times, due in part to:

- Isolation;
- Financial strain;
- Insufficient resources; and
- Parental exhaustion.

Report any concerns for child maltreatment to appropriate authorities and immediately refer students



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**Thank you for
your time and your assistance in
safely reopening our schools**

