

Is It Safe to Reopen Schools? 20 Questions to Ask First

Find out what are the important questions we need to answer before reopening schools and going back to in-class learning.

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Parents are concerned.

Teachers are concerned.

Educators are concerned.

Public health authorities are
concerned.



The question on everyone's mind: when will it be safe to reopen schools again?

“

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into school and keep them
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President Biden

20 Questions To Answer To Reopen Schools Safely

Let's look at the most recent information available to
answer 20 of the most important questions facing parents,
teachers, educators, and public health officials trying to
decide when it's safe to reopen schools.

1. President Biden Wants To Reopen Schools In 100 Days.

What's The Plan?

“It should be a national priority to get our kids back into school and keep them in school,” says President Biden. “If Congress provides the funding, we need to protect students, educators, and staff. If states and cities put strong public health measures in place that we all follow, then my team will work to see that the majority of our schools can be open by the end of my first 100 days.”

The incoming Biden administration has proposed a \$400 billion pandemic response budget to increase vaccination rates and provide financial relief to schools, local governments, and small businesses. Here are some of the key proposed budget line items which affect (either directly or indirectly) the safe reopening of schools:

- \$350 Billion Emergency Funding For State Local And Territorial Governments

Provides emergency aid to local governments hard-hit by tax revenue shortfalls to provide new funding sources for frontline workers, vaccine distribution, increase Covid testing, and costs associated with reopening schools.

- \$130 Billion Fund To Help Schools Reopen

The plan provides for substantially increased school funding to modify school buildings for increased social distancing, reduced class sizes, [personal protective equipment](#), and improved ventilation systems.

- Funding For 100,000 Public Health Workers To Manage Vaccine Outreach And Contact Tracing

Direct funding for 100,000 public health workers to established new vaccine outreach programs and enhanced contract tracing efforts, with particular emphasis placed on disadvantaged communities hard-hit by the pandemic.

- \$50 Billion Expanded Testing Program

This funding would support increased testing by local governments and schools, including the purchase of rapid Covid tests and expanded lab capacity.

- \$20 Billion National Vaccination Program

The proposal would help ramp up a national vaccination program similar to the massive polio vaccination campaigns of the 1950s, with funding for community vaccination centers and mobile units for rural areas.



Formaspace manufactures transparent dividers for use in schools. The Study Shield model above is available for a little as \$32 each.



The Formaspace Invisishield is a transparent space divider available in glass or acrylic. The glass divider version can also serve as mobile dry erase board.

- Emergency Paid Sick Leave And Medical Leave

Paid medical leave for those who do not have it will allow workers to stay home if they suspect they are sick (avoiding dangerous “presenteeism”) and help parents take care of sick children at home.

- 15% Increase In Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Benefits

The proposal would increase SNAP benefits available to low-income families by 15% until October. Additionally, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) would receive an additional \$3 billion investment.

- Increase Minimum Wage To \$15 Per Hour

The federally mandated minimum wage for non-exempt employees would be increased from \$7.25 to \$15.00 per hour.

- Emergency Increase In Child Tax Credit

The proposal would expand child tax credits for one year, allowing families to receive a tax credit of up to \$4,000 for a child under 13, or \$8,000 for two or more children.

2. What’s The Latest CDC Guidance On Covid Safety At [K-12 Schools](#)?

The CDC has ranked the relative risk of different school learning models from the lowest to the highest.

Lowest Risk: Virtual only classes, activities, and events.

Some Risk: Hybrid learning models that augment virtual classes with limited in-person learning, provided students and teachers follow scrupulous hygiene practices and remain in isolated “bubbles” or rigorously applied staggered schedules.

Medium Risk: Hybrid learning models where many students engage in in-person learning in larger classrooms with some mixing of different groups of students and teachers across schooldays.

Higher Risk: Full-time in-person learning activities and events with some mixing of different groups of students and teachers across schooldays.

Highest Risk: Full-time in-person learning activities and events with students and teachers freely mixing between classes and activities, poor sanitary hygiene practices, and freely sharing objects.

3. What Can Facility Managers Do To Make K-12 Schools Safer?

K-12 school facility managers have had to respond quickly to the challenges of conducting in-class learning during the Covid pandemic.

Some the primary strategies include reducing class sizes and spreading desks further apart to

increase social distancing, increasing ventilation and classrooms, either by opening windows during temperate days or revamping ventilation systems to draw air away (ideally up and out of the facility), and adding transparent dividers for students, teachers, for administrative support staff must work close to one another.

The CDC has also created “Plan, Prepare, and Respond” toolkits for facility managers and administrators operating school and child care programs, including:

- COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit

How to prevent the spread of Covid in your facility.

- Five-Step School Walk-Through Guide

This guide provides a hands-on approach to getting ready for in-person learning.

- How to Set up Your Classroom

Ways to modify layout and classroom behaviors to reduce virus risks.

- Guide for Teachers and Staff Returning to Class

What teachers, staff, and families need to know about returning to school.

4. What About Unconventional Or Alternative Schooling Ideas?

During the spring, summer, and fall, many school districts experimented with conducting in-person learning within outdoor classroom spaces.

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