

# 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

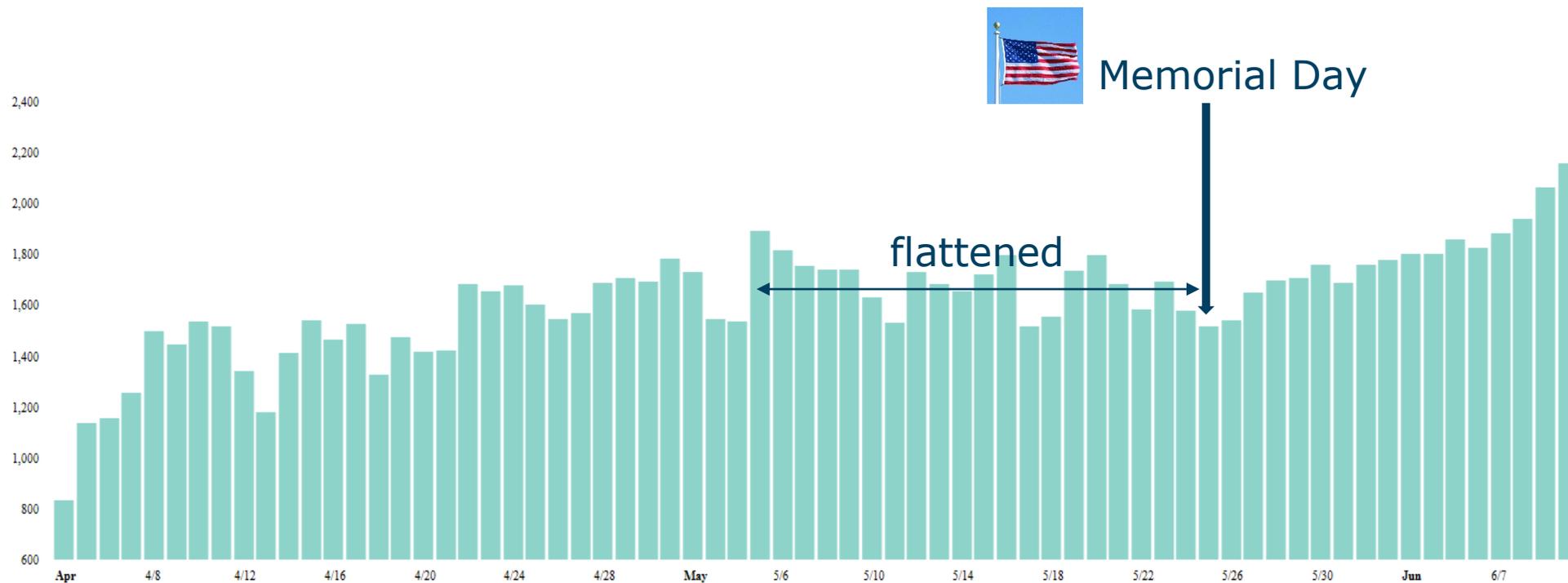
## Transmission of COVID-19 occurs when:

- 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



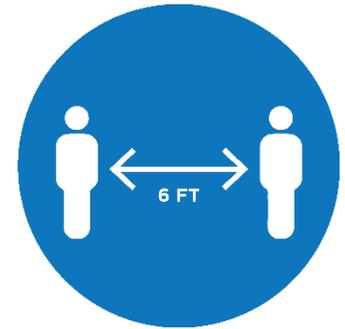
- Medical masks



- 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:

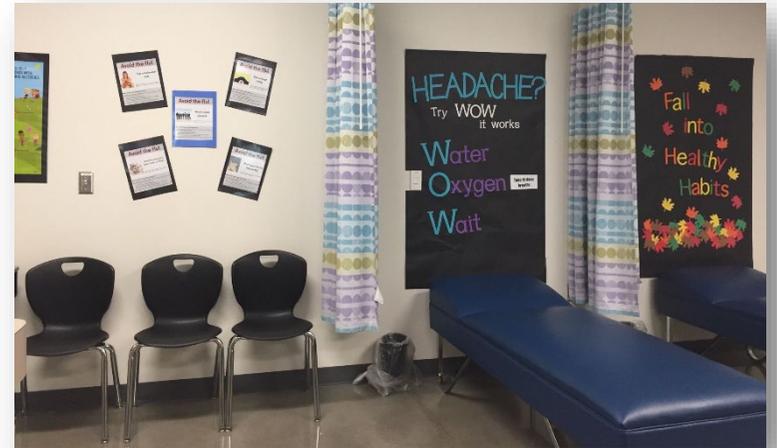
- Wear face covering at school if not already doing so **AND** if not medically contraindicated
- Wait for parents to arrive away from other students who are well, such as the nurse's office

**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.



# 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**

