COVID-19: Reopening for NCSoS Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year

July 15, 2020

Introduction and Overview

This document is designed to assist in a safer reopening of Earle Jamieson and Sugarloaf Mountain High School for the 2020-2021 school year. We recognize the importance of returning students to school campuses for in-person instruction, as well as the overarching need to protect the health and safety of our students, school staff, and broader community. The goal of this document is to help schools plan for and implement measures to reduce COVID-19 transmission in the school setting, while meeting the educational needs of all students.

Education, just like healthcare and food provision, is an essential service in our community, and as such, the reopening of school campuses for in-person instruction with strict safety protocols should be prioritized. School closures magnify socioeconomic, racial, and other inequities among students. The students most impacted by school closures are those without access to technologies that facilitate distance learning, those whose parents comprise a disproportionate share of our community’s essential workforce and may be less available to provide instructional support, and those with special needs. Disruption of normal childhood social interactions also have a profound adverse impact on students’ social and emotional well-being.

The Nevada County Public Health Department’s decision to reopen school campuses for in-person instruction and to keep them open will depend on a number of factors. These include, but
are not limited to, continually evolving scientific understanding of COVID-19, the number of current COVID-19 cases, the degree to which schools are contributing to community spread of COVID, the capacity of our health system to identify and care for cases and prevent transmission in healthcare settings, if Nevada County is on the watch-list, county residents’ ability to quickly and effectively isolate or quarantine themselves when sick, and our community’s continued cooperation in practicing physical distancing, using face coverings, and taking other preventive measures.

As we prepare to resume in-person instruction, we should also ensure plans are in place for remote instruction for students who may need to isolate or quarantine, as well as students who are medically fragile or who have a household member who is medically fragile. Schools should also be prepared for the possibility of partial or full school closure, either short-term or for a longer period. Because the data regarding the impact of school reopening on COVID-19 transmission dynamics remains incomplete, we will continue to learn and revise our guidance accordingly.

This document contains a series of public health requirements, recommendations, and considerations for schools reopening their campuses for in-person instruction. These should be read in conjunction with all relevant local, State, and federal laws, as well as school reopening guidance from the State and federal government.

Of particular relevance to this document are Education Code sections 43503 and 43504, which are in the process of being enacted by the State Legislature as this guidance is being released. Education Code section 43504 states that schools in California “shall offer in-person instruction to the greatest extent possible” during the 2020-2021 school year. Education Code section 43503 states, “Distance learning may be offered under either of the following circumstances: (A) On a local educational agency or school wide level as a result of an order or guidance from a state public health officer or a local public health officer. (B) For pupils who are medically fragile or would be put at risk by in-person instruction, or who are self-quarantining because of exposure to COVID-19.”

Requirements

The requirements in this document are actions that the Nevada County Public Health Department is requiring schools to follow as they resume in-person instruction. Only those items labeled “requirements” in this document must be in place for schools to proceed with in-person instruction.

Recommendations

The recommendations in this document are additional measures that the County of Nevada Public Health Department recommends schools take to protect the health and safety of students, staff, and the broader community. Recommendations from federal, state, or local public health officials is distinct from the legal orders or requirements that schools must follow. The guidance in this document reflects the best judgment of the County of Nevada Public Health Department as to practices that schools should follow, and it takes into account local conditions and
considerations. The California Department of Education’s “Stronger Together: A Guidebook for the Safe Reopening of California’s Public Schools” (June 2020) and the California Department of Public Health’s “COVID-19 Industry Guidance: Schools and School-Based Programs” (June 5, 2020) offer general guidance for the entire state, where conditions vary significantly from region to region.

Considerations

Finally, the considerations in this document provide concrete examples of how the requirements or recommendations may be implemented and factors that school administrators may want to keep in mind when implementing them. These considerations are not requirements that schools must follow or even recommendations that the County urges schools to adopt.

We are considering the spectrum of possibilities of intermittent partial or full school closures (short-term or long-term) in the upcoming academic year. This document, therefore, was designed to provide clear direction while allowing Earle Jamieson and Sugarloaf appropriate flexibility based on their own individual constraints and resources.

Section 1: Prevention

Common public health strategies to reduce the risk of disease transmission in schools and other community settings include: (1) minimizing the number of people who come into contact with each other, (2) maximizing the physical distance between people, (3) reducing the time that people spend in close proximity to others, and (4) measures to minimize dispersion of droplets and aerosols (e.g., using face coverings and covering coughs and sneezes). Because the relative contribution of each of these measures in reducing the spread of COVID-19 is not yet clear, public health experts have generally recommended that they be used collectively where possible.

Organizing Principle: Stable Cohorts

Organizing Principle: Physical Distancing and Face Covering

A. Physical Distancing

1. General

Requirements

- Communicate with all staff and families regarding physical distancing requirements and recommendations.
- Nevada County will train staff and students on protocols for physical distancing for both indoor and outdoor spaces.
- Post signage reminding students and staff about physical distancing in prominent locations throughout each school campus.
- Allow only necessary visitors and volunteers on the campus and limit the number of students and staff who come into contact with them.
• For outside organizations utilizing school facilities outside of school hours, ensure that they follow all required health, sanitizing and safety measures.

2. Arrival and Departure

Requirements

• Provide supervision to minimize close contact between students, staff, families, and the broader community at arrival and departure through the following methods:

• Designate routes for entry and exit, using as many entrances and exits as can be supervised appropriately to decrease crowding at entry and exit points.

• Instruct drivers to remain in their vehicles, to the extent possible, when dropping off or picking up students. When in-person drop-off or pick-up is needed, only a single parent or caregiver should enter the facility to pick up or drop off the child.

• Require adults entering campus for in-person pick-up or drop-off to wear a face covering.

Considerations

• Place markings on the ground to facilitate physical distancing of six feet or more at all school entry and exit points and crosswalks near the school.

• If crowding of students is occurring during arrival or departure, consider staggering arrival or departure times and designating multiple pick-up and drop-off locations.

3. Classroom Settings

Requirements

• Classrooms at both Earle Jamieson and Sugarloaf will reduce disease transmission risk by maximizing the space between student desks.

• Both schools will distance teacher and staff desks at least six feet away from students to minimize staff to student disease transmission.

• Assign stable seating arrangements for students to ensure that close contacts within classrooms are minimized and easily identifiable.

• Students will use their own materials (pens, pencils, books, devices, etc.) not to be shared with other students.

• Keep students’ belongings separate/in the lockers so that students do not come in contact with other students’ belongings.

Recommendations

• Space students at least six feet apart, if possible in existing facilities. If that is not possible, consider placing barriers between students.

• Establish stable classroom cohorts for the entire school day, if feasible.
In All Settings

- Class sizes should be as small as practicable.
- Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high-touch materials (art supplies, equipment, electronic devices, etc.) to the extent practicable, or limit use of supplies and equipment to one group of students at a time and clean and disinfect between uses.
- Reduce the amount of furniture and equipment in the classroom to facilitate distancing and reduce high-touch surfaces.
- Increase ventilation by increasing outdoor air circulation (e.g., by opening windows) or using high-efficiency air filters and increasing ventilation rates.

Considerations

- Non-classroom space for instruction (including regular use of outdoor space, gyms, or cafeterias), if doing so will allow for greater distancing between students.
- Place markings on classroom floors to facilitate physical distancing.
- For middle schools/junior high schools and high schools, stable classroom cohorts can be facilitated by having different teachers rotate into the classroom to teach different subjects.

4. Non-Classroom Settings

Recommendations

- Restrooms: Stagger restroom use by one student at time.
- Lunch: Serve meals in classrooms, outdoors, and lunch area to separate students
- Breaks: Activities in separated areas designated by class and/or staggered throughout the day. Limit use of shared playground equipment in favor of physical activities that require less contact with surfaces and allow for greater physical distancing.
- Physical Activities: Maintain separation of classes and with appropriate physical distancing within groups to the extent practicable. Face coverings should not be worn during exercise.
- Hallways: Minimize congregate movement through hallways as much as practicable. For example, establish more ways to enter and exit a campus, stagger passing times when necessary or when students cannot stay in one room, and establish designated one-way walking/passage areas.
- Staff Rooms (Kitchen area EJ): Max of two staff members in the break room/kitchen at a given time (particularly rooms that are small) to allow for physical distancing. Encourage or require staff to eat meals outdoors or in large, well ventilated spaces.
- Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, unless doing so would pose a health or safety risk to individuals using the facility (e.g., allowing in pollen, smoke or exacerbating asthma symptoms). If opening windows poses a safety health risk, maximize central air filtration for HVAC systems.
- School Offices: Space staff at least six feet apart.
5. Bus Transportation (Gold Country Stage)

Requirements

- Because our students use public transportation through the Gold Country Stage, students will adhere to the Nevada County Health and Safety guidelines.

Considerations

- Maximize physical distancing between students at bus stops by placing ground markings at bus stops.

A. Hygiene Measures

1. Face Coverings

Requirements

Teachers and staff

- All adults must wear a face covering at all times while on campus, except while eating or drinking.
- Staff excluded from this requirement are those that require respiratory protection according to Cal/OSHA standards.
- All staff will be educated and communicate with all families and students the rationale and proper use of face coverings, the expectations for use of face coverings at school and how to wash face coverings.

Students

- All students are required to wear face coverings:
  - while arriving and departing from school campus;
  - in any area outside where others are near, in the classroom (except when eating, drinking, or engaging in physical activity);
  - while waiting for or riding on the bus.
- Middle school/junior high school and high school students must use cloth face coverings when in the school building/classroom even if they are in a stable classroom cohort.
- Students excluded from face covering requirements include students that have an underlying health condition that poses a threat to the students’ health.
Recommendations

- If a student or staff experiences difficulty wearing his/her face covering, allow the individual to remove his/her face covering for a short period of time outside and distanced from others.
- Provide face coverings for students and staff who lose their face coverings or forget to bring them to school.
- Face shields are not recommended as a replacement for face coverings given concerns over their ability to minimize droplet spread to others. Teachers may consider using face shields when appropriate, such as in certain limited situations where during phonological instruction to enable students to see the teacher’s mouth and in settings where a cloth face covering poses a barrier to communicating with a student who is hearing impaired or a student with a disability.

2. Handwashing and Other Hygiene Measures

Requirements

- Teach and reinforce proper handwashing technique, avoiding contact with one’s eyes, nose, and mouth, and covering coughs and sneezes.
- Post signage in high visibility areas to remind students and staff of proper techniques for handwashing and covering of coughs and sneezes and other prevention measures.
- Ensure adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, tissues, no-touch trash-cans, face coverings and hand sanitizers (with at least 60 percent ethyl alcohol) for staff and students who can safely use hand sanitizer.
- Minimize the sharing of supplies and equipment among staff and students to the extent feasible. When items must be shared, clean and disinfect items between uses.
- Minimize staff’s and students’ contact with high-touch surfaces (e.g., propping open building or room doors, particularly at arrival and departure times).

Recommendations

- Model, practice, and monitor handwashing.
- Develop routines to ensure students wash their hands or use hand sanitizer upon arrival to campus and prior to leaving the classroom; after using the restroom; after playing outside and returning to the classroom; before and after eating; and after coughing or sneezing.
- Have students and staff wash hands at staggered intervals to minimize congregation around handwashing and hand sanitizer stations.
- Proper handwashing is more effective at preventing transmission, but hand sanitizer is an acceptable alternative if handwashing is not practicable.
- Provide hand sanitizer in each classroom, in any other indoor space used by students or staff, at building entrances/exits, and at locations designated for students or staff to eat.
- Suspend or modify use of site resources that necessitate sharing or touching items. For example, consider suspending use of shared condiment bottles and installing hydration stations; encourage the use of reusable water bottles.
C. Cleaning and Maintenance

Requirements

- At least daily, and more frequently if feasible, clean and disinfect frequently touched hard surfaces (e.g., tables, desks, chairs, door handles, light switches, phones, copy/fax machines, bathroom surfaces (toilets, countertops, faucets), drinking fountains, and playground equipment) and shared objects (games, art supplies, books) pursuant to CDC guidance.
- If cohorts of students travel between classes, desks should be wiped off with disinfectant wipes.

Recommendations

- Please use the cleaning products provided by NCSoS. When choosing cleaning products, use those approved for use against COVID-19 on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved list and follow product instructions. Choose asthma-safer ingredients (hydrogen peroxide, citric acid or lactic acid) whenever possible and avoid products that mix these ingredients with peroxyacetic (paracetic) acid, sodium hypochlorite (bleach) or quaternary ammonium compounds, which can exacerbate asthma.
- Ensure proper ventilation during cleaning and disinfecting. Introduce fresh outdoor air as much as possible, for example, by opening windows where practicable. When cleaning, air out the space before students arrive; plan to do thorough cleaning when students are not present. If using air conditioning, use the setting that brings in fresh air. Replace and check air filters and filtration systems to ensure optimal air quality.
- Ensure that all water systems are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of Legionnaires’ disease and other waterborne diseases.
- After an illness, limit access to areas used by the sick person (e.g., a student’s desk or a staff member’s office) until cleaned and disinfected.
- Disinfecting must take place between classes and after school.

Considerations

- Limit use of items that are difficult to clean and sanitize.

D. Food Services

Requirements

- Refer to Distancing Section above for requirements regarding physical distancing in cafeterias and food service areas.
- Follow all requirements issued by the Nevada County’s Department of Health to prevent transmission of COVID-19 in food facilities.
Recommendations

- Serve meals in multiple areas or outdoors to separate students instead of in the lunch room or group dining rooms where practicable. Serve individually plated or bagged meals. Avoid sharing of foods and utensils and buffet or family-style meals.

E. Electives

2. Electives and Extracurricular Activities

Requirements

- Do not allow electives and extracurricular activities in which physical distancing (at least six feet) and face covering use cannot be maintained at all times.
- Do not allow aerosol generating activities, including in-person choir, band, and vocal cheerleading activities (cheers and chants) due to increased risk of disease transmission.

Considerations

- Consider whether extracurricular activities can be conducted outdoors or virtually (e.g., remote broadcasting of musical and theatrical practice and performances) or while maintaining stable classroom cohorts.

3. School Events

Requirements

- Assemblies, and other gatherings will be permitted to the extent allowed under any applicable requirements for gatherings occurring in the community.
- Use Zoom or another virtual platform when possible
- In both schools:
  - Attendance at school events should be limited to students and staff or those participating in a presentation only (no visitors).

Recommendations

- Maximize the number of school events that can be held virtually or outside.
- Events involving on-campus visitors interacting with staff or students should be minimized.
Section 2: Monitoring

A. Health Screenings

Health screenings refer to symptom screening, temperature screening, or a combination of both. Although temperature screening for COVID-19 has become a widespread practice in a variety of business and community settings, its limited effectiveness may be outweighed by potential harms. With respect to COVID-19, the CDC acknowledges that "fever and symptom screening have proven to be relatively ineffective in identifying all infected individuals." This is because people with COVID-19 can infect others before they become ill (pre-symptomatic transmission), some people with COVID-19 never become ill but can still infect others (asymptomatic transmission), and fever may not be the first symptom to appear.

Requirements

- Post signs at all entrances instructing students, staff, and visitors not to enter campus if they have any COVID-19 symptoms. COVID-19 symptoms include fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, recent loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- All students and staff should be screened for symptoms each day. Staff and students’ parents or guardians can conduct symptom screening at-home, prior to arrival. Alternatively, symptom screening can occur on-site via self-reporting, visual inspection, or a symptom screening questionnaire. Symptom screenings do not need to be performed by a nurse or other health professional.
- If temperature screening is performed, contactless thermometers should be used.
- Contact thermometers should only be used when a fever is suspected and if appropriate PPE can be used (facemask, eye protection, and disposable gloves). Contact thermometers must be properly cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- Students or staff with any identified COVID-19 symptoms and/or a temperature of 100.2 or higher must be sent home immediately until testing and/or medical evaluation has been conducted.
- Communicate screening requirements to all staff and families. Provide periodic reminders throughout the school year.

Recommendations

- If in practice, any on-campus temperature screening (for students or staff) should be conducted using a contactless thermometer with a physical barrier in place to separate the screener from individuals screened. Specifically,
  - Screening stations should be set up at least six feet apart from each other.
  - A physical barrier, such as a glass window or clear plastic barrier on a table, for the person taking the temperature to stand behind, should be put in place.
  - If a barrier cannot be put in place, the person measuring temperatures should be trained and wear appropriate PPE (facemask, eye protection, and disposable gloves).
• When using a non-touch (infra-red) or temporal thermometer, gloves do not need to be changed before the next check if the individual screened was not touched.

**Recommended Health Screening for Students and Staff**

All students and staff and visitors will follow the Nevada County Public Health protocols for school classroom /cohort settings on:

• Onset of COVID-19 symptoms
• Potential exposure to and /or close contact with an individual who tests positive for COVID-19

**B. COVID-19 Testing and Reporting**

**Get Tested**

Two OptumServe testing sites are available in Nevada County, Grass Valley and the Town of Truckee.

Symptomatic or asymptomatic can be tested. Insured, underinsured, and uninsured are welcome.

You must pre-register and schedule an appointment at [https://www.lhi.care/covidtesting](https://www.lhi.care/covidtesting) or call 888-634-1123. Please have your appointment authorization number when you arrive at the testing site. Appointments are available Monday-Friday, 7:00am to 7:00pm in the Town of Truckee and in Grass Valley.

According to our Nevada County Public Health Department, tests can also still be conducted by doctor’s offices too, but you do not need your physician’s approval to be tested at the OptumServe site. Call your primary care physician before physically going to the doctor.

Please note that return time for results may vary and can be expected within 2-7 days.

If you do not have a primary care physician, please call our Coronavirus Call Center through Connecting Point by dialing 2-1-1 or 1-833-DIAL211 to talk with a call center representative.

The call center representatives at 211 can help with all non-emergency and non-medical inquiries.

**OptumServe Testing Site Locations**

**Western Nevada County:**

Grass Valley Veterans Hall: 255 S Auburn St, Grass Valley, CA 95945
Requirements

- Require students and staff to get tested as soon as possible after they develop one or more COVID-19 symptoms or if one of their household members or non-household close contacts tested positive for COVID-19.
- Positive test results:

  - Require that parents/guardians and staff notify school administration immediately if the student or staff tested positive for COVID-19 or if one of their household members or non-household close contacts tested positive for COVID-19.
  - Upon receiving notification that staff or a student has tested positive for COVID-19 or been in close contact with a COVID-19 case, take actions as required in Section 3 below.

- Negative test results:

  - Symptomatic students or staff who test negative for COVID-19 should remain home until at least 72 hours after resolution of fever (if any) and improvement in other symptoms.
  - Asymptomatic non-household close contacts to a COVID-19 case should remain at home for a total of 14 days from date of last exposure even if they test negative.
  - Asymptomatic household contacts should remain at home until 14 days after the COVID-19 positive household member completes their isolation.

Considerations

- Provide parents and staff with information regarding nearby testing sites.
- All teachers are recommended, but not required, to be tested for COVID-19 prior to the beginning of the school year, and then recommended for additional testing no less than once every two months thereafter, as testing capacity permits and as practicable.

Section 3: Response to Suspected or Confirmed Cases and Close Contacts

Requirements

Suspected COVID-19 Case(s):

- Work with school administrators, nurses, and other healthcare providers to identify an area to separate anyone who exhibits COVID-19 symptoms.
- Any students or staff exhibiting symptoms should immediately be required to wear a face covering and wait in an isolation area until they can be transported home or to a healthcare facility, as soon as practicable. For serious illness, call 9-1-1 without delay.
Confirmed COVID-19 Case(s):

- School administrators should notify the Nevada County Public Health Department immediately of any positive COVID-19 case. Notify all staff and families in the school community of any positive COVID-19 case while maintaining confidentiality as required by state and federal laws.
- Close off areas used by any sick person and do not use before cleaning and disinfection. To reduce risk of exposure, wait 24 hours before you clean and disinfect. If it is not possible to wait 24 hours, wait as long as practicable. Ensure a safe and correct application of disinfectants using personal protective equipment and ventilation.
- Utilize class seating rosters and consultation with teachers/staff to identify close contacts to the confirmed COVID-19 case in all classrooms and on-campus activities. A close contact is someone who has been within six feet of the case for a prolonged period of time (at least 10-15 minutes) regardless of face covering use. Close contacts should be instructed to get COVID-19 testing and should remain quarantined at home for 14 days.

Close contacts to confirmed COVID-19 Case(s):

- Close contacts (household or non-household) of confirmed COVID-19 cases should be sent home immediately, instructed to get COVID-19 testing, and, immediately and on day 10 of the last day of exposure to the case. They should even if they test negative, remain in quarantine for a full 14 days after (1) date of last exposure to COVID-19 positive non-household contact or (2) date that COVID-19 positive household member completes their isolation.
- No actions need to be taken for persons who have not had direct contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case.
- Those who test positive should not return back to the school site for 14 days.

Return to Campus after Testing:

- Symptomatic individuals who test negative for COVID-19 can return 72 hours after resolution of fever (if any) and improvement in symptoms.
- Documentation of a negative test result should be provided to school administrators.
- Symptomatic individuals who test positive for COVID-19 can return 14 days after symptom onset OR 7 days after resolution of fever and improvement in other symptoms, whichever is longer.
- Asymptomatic individuals who test positive for COVID-19 can return 14 days after their positive test result.
- If they test positive, close contacts to confirmed COVID-19 cases can return after completing the required isolation period described above.
- If they test negative, close contacts to confirmed COVID-19 cases can return a full 14 days after (1) date of last exposure to COVID-19 positive non-household contact or (2) date that COVID-19 positive household member completes their isolation.
Table 1. Steps to Take in Response to Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 Cases and Close Contacts

Scenario 1: A student or staff member either exhibits COVID-19 symptoms, answers “yes” to a health screening question, or has a temperature of 100.2 or above.

- Student/staff sent home
- Student/staff instructed to get tested
- No action is needed

Scenario 2: A family member or someone in close contact with a student or staff member (outside the school community) tests positive for COVID-19

- Student/staff sent home
- Student/staff instructed to get tested
- Student/staff instructed to quarantine, even if they test negative, for a full 14 days after (1) date of last exposure to COVID-19 positive non-household contact or (2) COVID-19 positive household member completes their isolation
- If student/staff test positive, see Scenario 3 below
- School administration notified
- For the Involved Student Family or Staff Member: Template Letter: Household Member or Close Contact With COVID-19 Case

Scenario 3: A student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19.

- Student/staff sent home if not already quarantined
- Student/staff instructed to isolate for 14 days after symptom onset OR 7 days after resolution of symptoms, whichever is longer. (If never symptomatic, isolate for 14 days after positive test.)
- School-based close contacts identified and instructed to test & quarantine for 14 days
- School administration notified
- Public Health Department notified

Table 2. Steps to Take in Response to Negative Test Result

A student or staff member tests negative for COVID-19 after Scenario 1 (symptomatic)

- Student/staff may return to school 72 hours after resolution of fever and improvement in other symptoms
- Student family/staff to bring evidence of negative COVID-19 test or medical note if testing not performed
- A student or staff member tests negative after Scenario 2 (close contact)
- Student/staff must remain in quarantine for a full 14 days after (1) date of last exposure to COVID-19 positive non-household contact or (2) date that COVID-19 positive household member completes their isolation
- No action is needed
• A student or staff member tests negative after routine surveillance testing (no symptoms and no close contact to a confirmed COVID-19 case)
• Can return to school/work immediately
• No action is needed

Section 4: Distance/Remote Learning for Particular Students

Considerations

Regardless of on-site school conditions, distance/remote learning should be made available for the following students:

• Students who are medically fragile or would be put at risk by in-person instruction, or who are isolating or quarantining because of exposure to COVID-19
• Students who live in a household with anybody who is medically fragile will be provided with education options. (see below)