

June 11, 2020

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The New Routines for Students When Schools Reopen



Teacher Jane Cooper uses a 2-meter (just over 6 feet) ruler and pipe to check seat spacings in her classroom at Lostock Hall Primary School in Poynton, England. —AP Photo/Jon Super

By Madeline Will

June 10, 2020

When students return to school, their day-to-day experiences will be dictated by social-distancing rules and recommendations from public health authorities. Long-established routines of how they learn and socialize will have to change.

Education Week spoke to more than a dozen experts, including public health officials, education leaders, and superintendents, to discuss how students' daily lives may look in this new reality.

Avoid the morning rush.

The minutes before the first bell when students stream, en masse, through the main entrance will slow to more of a trickle.

> Ideas to make it work: Assign students to use different entrances. Stagger drop-off processes, so students don't arrive all at once. Put tape marks on the floor where students will need to line up to indicate social distancing.

Ditch the lockers.

Health officials have recommended against letting students store items in lockers—especially if they share a locker with a classmate.

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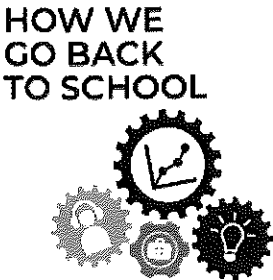
Will COVID-19 closures impact student learning?

> **Ideas to make it work:** Some districts, like Pinellas County in Florida, may put as many textbooks as possible online, so lockers won't be needed.

Rearrange classrooms.

Six feet. That's the starting point for planning every space in the school. For classrooms, that means six feet of distance between desks and turning desks to face the same direction, at least for the time being, the established practice of desks clustered together in groups, fostering student collaboration. This will be difficult to pull off in already-crowded classrooms.

> **Ideas to make it work:** Consider every space in your building, indoor and outdoor. Repurpose larger rooms, like the library or the auditorium, into additional classrooms. Ask teachers to pare down extra furniture and other items in their classrooms—like bookshelves, rugs, and comfortable seating—to accommodate more students. Schools might also consider separating students' desks with partitions to create a physical barrier.



HOW WE GO BACK TO SCHOOL

District and school leaders are confronting difficult, high-stakes decisions as they plan for how to reopen schools amid a global pandemic. Through eight installments, Education Week journalists explore the big challenges education leaders must address, including running a socially distanced school, rethinking how to get students to and from school, and making up for learning losses. We present a broad spectrum of options endorsed by public health officials, explain strategies that some districts will adopt, and provide estimated costs.

Read Part 1: The Socially Distanced School Day

Minimize movement.

Students might spend their entire day in the same classroom, with teachers moving from room to room.

> **Ideas to make it work:** Hold some elective courses online and prioritize core classes during in-person instruction.

Pay special attention to the most vulnerable students.

Know which students lost the most ground in their learning and struggled most in prolonged closures when only remote learning could be provided and make specific plans to support them.

> **Ideas to make it work:** If some virtual learning must continue as school buildings begin to reopen, students with disabilities, English-language learners, and students don't have reliable access to online learning should receive priority to be in school day.

Banish shared school supplies.

Teachers will need to devise a new system of school supply distribution to adhere U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendation to minimize the sharing of high-touch materials. This will require the most rethinking in the early days where there's typically a communal supply of pencils, crayons, markers, and other materials.

> **Ideas to make it work:** Teachers can assign supplies to a single child or allow group of children to use the supplies at a time, disinfecting between every use. Schools with enough resources can purchase and provide the extra supplies to avoid inequity for students whose families can't afford to buy the materials.

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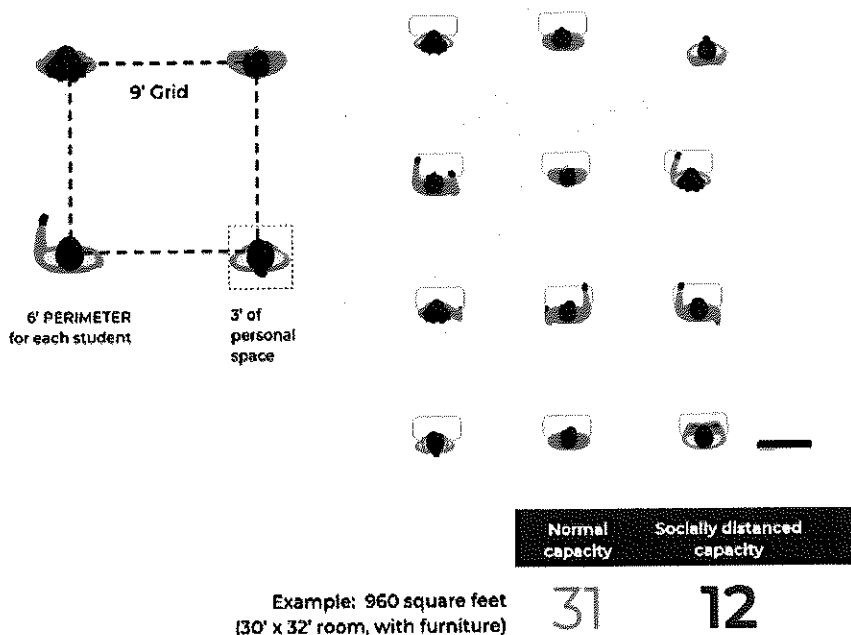
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Provide alternatives to science labs and other hands-on instruction.

Typically, students share equipment during laboratory experiments and work in close quarters, which can pose a safety risk.

> **Ideas to make it work:** National Science Teachers Association President Elizabeth Allen said teachers will have to consider alternatives to in-person experiments, including virtual reality and simulations, solo demonstrations by the teacher, and asking students to do some experiments at home. However, teachers must consider whether their students have the resources and support to safely perform any parts of the lab at home. Teachers might also have to pare down their curriculum to teach only the standards and avoid any "extras."

Arranging Instructional Spaces



SOURCE: National Council on School Facilities and Cooperative Strategies

Icons: iStock/Getty

Serve lunch in classrooms.

The CDC recommends that schools serve meals in classrooms instead of the cafet while taking precautions to ensure the safety of children with food allergies.

> **Ideas to make it work:** Individually packaged meals can be provided instead having serving lines that require students to congregate in close quarters and sha serving utensils.

Reorgaize recess.

Students will likely go to recess in staggered shifts, so there aren't too many chilc outside at once.

> **Ideas to make it work:** Some school leaders are considering assigning small of playmates, so students only play with the same children each day. The CDC su that schools keep playgrounds closed, but if that's not possible, it recommends th schools stagger the use of the playground equipment and disinfect it in between uses. Students will need to wash or sanitize their hands before coming back inside.

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Limit or pause extracurricular activities.

The CDC has recommended that schools cancel all extracurricular activities in the first phase of reopening, and then limit activities to those that can be done while maintaining social distancing.

> Ideas to make it work:

- For sports, the National Federation of State High School Associations, which writes the rules of competition for most high school athletics, **has released guidelines on restarting athletic practices and competitions.** The group based the three phases in its guidelines on the White House's reopening plan, which relaxes restrictions as the local rate of infection declines.
 - In the first phase, locker rooms should be closed, workouts should be conducted in pods, with the same five to 10 students always working out together, and students should avoid sharing balls during workouts. In the second phase, students should keep working out in pods, locker rooms can reopen if social distancing is maintained, and practices and competitions for lower-risk sports can resume, as can moderate-risk sports practices with some modifications. In phase three, there can be gatherings of up to 50 people both outdoors and indoors, competitions for moderate-risk sports can begin, and high-risk sports practices can begin with some modifications. In all phases, increased hygiene and sanitation measures will be critical. Student-athletes should wear face coverings in phase one and two, except during swimming, distance running, or other high-intensity aerobic activities.
 - Lower-risk sports include cross country (with staggered starts), golf, weightlifting, and sideline cheerleading. Moderate-risk sports include basketball, volleyball, baseball, soccer, gymnastics, tennis, girls' lacrosse, and seven-on-seven, non-contact football. High-risk sports include wrestling, football, boys' lacrosse, and competitive cheerleading.
- For choir, students will have to engage in social distancing while singing. They should all be facing the same direction, spaced six feet apart, and be wearing masks. The Missouri Music Educators Association has recommended that conductors face the chorus 10 to 20 feet away from the first row of singers. Schools could consider installing a plexiglass shield in front of conductors or require them to wear goggles.
- For band, students must use the same instrument for the entirety of the rehearsal, and those instruments should be properly cleaned and sanitized after every use. There could also be limitations on which instruments are safe to use. The Missouri Music Educators Association has said careful consideration should be given to teaching the flute, and the Taipei American School has restricted the use of brass and wind instruments.
- For theatre performances, students might have to put on their shows in an empty room, if they're allowed to perform at all. At the Taipei American School, for instance, students performed "The Little Mermaid" in full costumes and masks with no audience. The performance was filmed so parents could watch at home.

Assistant Editor Denisa R. Superville contributed to this report.

Education Week spoke to many experts for this installment. In alphabetical order, are: Elizabeth Allen, the president of the National Science Teachers Association; J Bailey, a visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute; Nathaniel Beers, a pediatrician at Children's National Hospital in Washington; Andrew Buher, the founding managing director of Opportunity Labs; Grace Cheng Dodge, the deputy head of school for the Taipei American School; Sharon Danks, the CEO and founder of Green Schools America; Dan Domenech, the executive director of AASA, the National School Superintendents Association; Mary Filardo, the executive director of 21st Century School Fund; George Harrison, the deputy secretary of educational services at the New South Wales Department of Education; David Hornak, the executive director of the National Association for Year-Round Education; Larry Kraut, the chief operating officer of the Taipei American School; Sandy Mackenzie, the director of the Copenhagen International School; Curt Macysyn, the executive director of the National School Transportation Association; Rob Miller, the superintendent of Bixby Public Schools in Tulsa, Okla.; Ali Mokdad, a professor

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at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington; Scott Muri, the superintendent of Ector County Independent school district in Odessa, Texas; Mario Ramirez, an emergency medicine physician and the managing director of Opportunity Labs; L. Oliver Robinson, the superintendent of Shenendehowa Central Schools in Clifton Park, N.Y.; Monica Rogers, the information systems manager for the Tulsa Health Department.

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Dr. Sheila L. S • 7 hours ago

One of the CDC's recommendations really is troublesome for me. Restaurants across the country are opening dining rooms and, of course, preparing hot meals. Why would they make a recommendation for only pre-packaged food realizing that many of our children rely on those meals and may lack the means to have a warm meal particularly as temperatures drop to near zero in the winter. Many districts are holding on to every word from the CDC, and rightfully so; however, couldn't the assumption be that professional food service providers would also monitor their staff in preparing hot food as they would in the preparation of colder and pre-packaged meals? Are larger corporations' cafeterias only cold meals to adults? Think this through because our children deserve that we can give them. * This is my personal opinion.

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