



# Reopening Guidance

**August 14, 2020**

**Note: This document will be revised as new information becomes available.**

**Updated: August 24, 2020**

## Letter from Superintendent

As we get closer to the start of the school year, I know it brings with it many challenging decisions for our families and staff. First and foremost, please know that we deeply care for our students and staff. Decisions about school reopening come with many sleepless nights for all of us. I wish we weren't in the midst of a pandemic but we are and as such there is no such thing as "normal". As a district, we consider each decision point very carefully and from a variety of perspectives all of them grounded in science/data.

Over the past few weeks, I have fielded many questions from every side of the debate to reopen schools. There is simply no way to make everyone happy. Every family and staff member has their own unique circumstances that will lead them to make personal decisions that they feel are best for them, and I respect that. I have a family too and am making those same decisions each and every day.

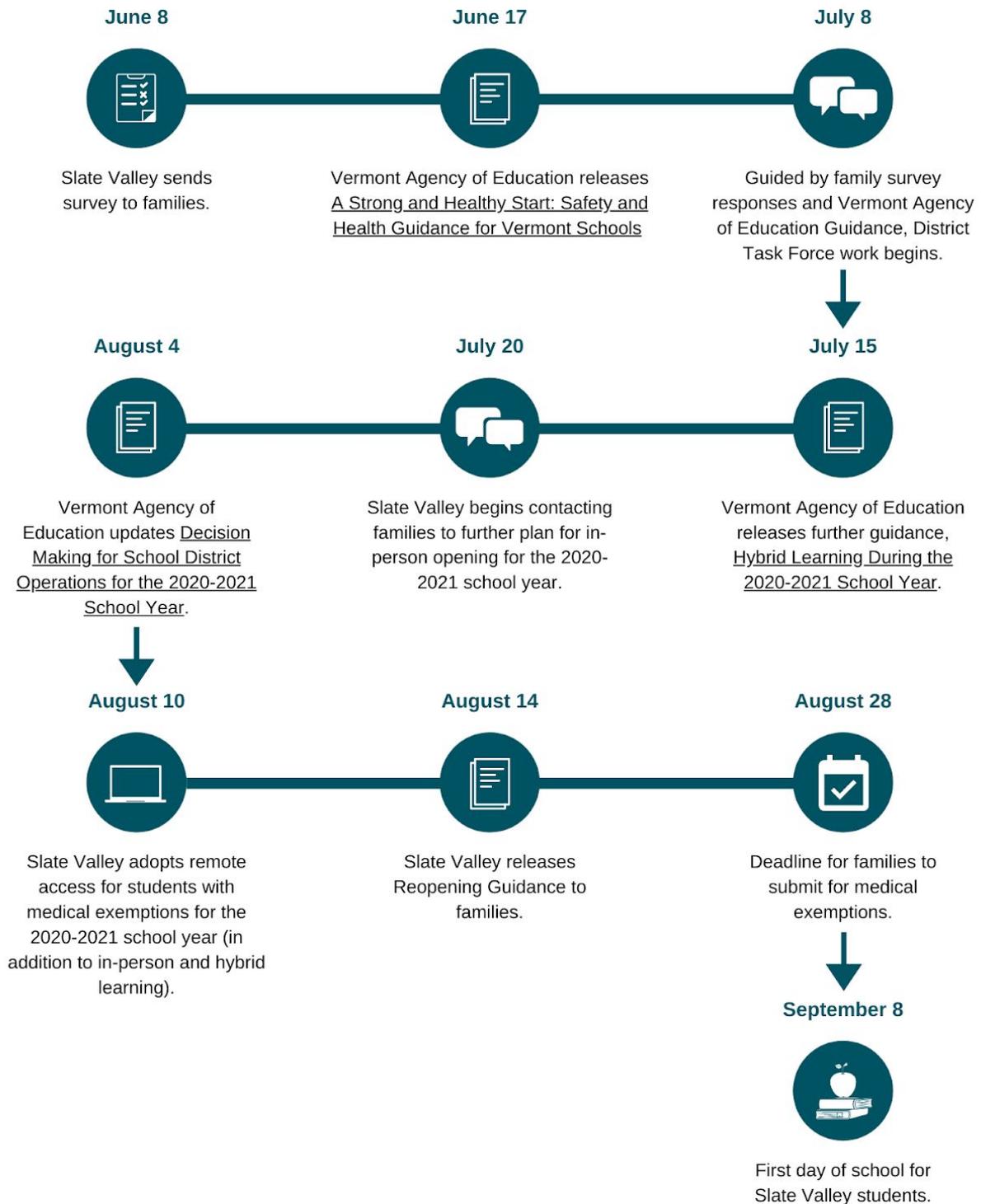
I want to explain why the district decided on the plan that we did. First, the plan for now is to have all PreK-8 students in person 5 days a week. Grades 9-12 will follow a hybrid, every other day model. We are providing remote access to in-person learning for families that have a documented medical exemption only at this point. The following points and explanations, provide the basis for Slate Valley's reopening:

1. We do not have cases locally and the best way to educate students is in person. We will closely monitor the level of cases in our area and respond appropriately as necessary to safeguard the health of our students, their families and our staff. We will consider implementing remote teaching if that is the best course of action.
2. In-person and remote learning for all families would require a shift in scheduling from a 5 day in-person to something different. This would present childcare challenges for families Monday through Friday. More of our families want the in-person option than the remote given work schedules.
3. Students, and/or families who have medical documentation indicating they should not be in-person will be provided with remote access. Remote access will provide concurrent in-person learning, when and where appropriate, for students with medical exemptions. A high level of student oversight by a parent/guardian will be required as a student's day will follow the school schedule.
4. When not in school for 5 days, our younger students need child care. We simply do not have enough childcare providers to support our working families. The best way for us to support families, and especially those with young children that need childcare, is by offering in school learning.

Again, none of this is easy. I respect every decision families feel they need to make. Slate Valley is focused on in-person learning to best meet the needs of our students and the desires of the majority of our families. We will continue to be guided by science and make thoughtful decisions about the safety of all.

Brooke Farrell  
Superintendent

## Reopening Timeline



## Vermont Agency of Education Guidance

- [A Strong and Healthy Start: Safety and Health Guidance for Vermont Schools](#)
- [Hybrid Learning During the 2020-2021 School Year](#)
- [Decision Making for School District Operations for the 2020-2021 School Year](#)

**In-Person** – Students receive instruction at school.

Slate Valley is designing in-person learning for more [long-lasting changes](#), some of which would remain if/when we go back to normal. Slate Valley’s design to in-person learning has educators developing: outdoor classrooms, greater cohesion across content areas (interdisciplinary focus), experiential and authentic learning in and outside of school, stronger advisory systems, a stronger focus on essential topics and skills, and the reintroduction of out of school work that reinforces, extends, or provides practice.

The following research from [Maryland Public Schools’ Reopening Plan](#) was used to design Slate Valley’s reopening plan.

- [Research consistently](#) finds fully online virtual schools produce less effective outcomes than those for students who are in brick and mortar school settings.
- The manner by which instruction is delivered can have a larger effect than any particular curriculum or textbook. The research that is available on remote learning suggests that instruction should occur through synchronous learning for greater understanding, and [social](#) and [collaborative](#) reasons (both between student and teacher, and among students).
- [Research](#) on remote learning suggests that younger students, K-5, have more trouble processing content delivered via online learning, even if delivery is synchronous. Further research, including an [NWEA simulation](#), indicates that students in grades 3-8 will experience more of a negative impact when learning stops or slows down than students in later grades.
- [Research](#) on distance learning suggests that at-risk, low-performing students are the population most likely to be negatively impacted by online schooling, meaning these students should have in-person instruction prioritized for them.

### **In-Person & Hybrid Learning**

#### **Roles and Responsibilities for Classroom Teachers**

- Post learning materials and lessons in Google Classroom, Sites, Seesaw for your classes every Monday by 8:00 am for a [Learning Chunk \(Updated 7/6/20\)](#). A Learning Chunk provides a checklist for the work that must be completed over the course of the week.
- For students on IEPs, teachers and case managers will collaborate to determine appropriate modifications or accommodations to meet student needs prior to the sharing of a [Learning Chunk](#).
- Communicate summative dates for students and parents/guardians in order to plan

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|  | <p>workload in the <a href="#">Learning Chunk</a> (Updated 7/6/20).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make yourself available via email to answer questions about the activities, as needed.</li> <li>• Assess student work and/or <a href="#">provide feedback on assignments</a> at least weekly.</li> <li>• Design learning plans (use the <a href="#">SVU Planning Tool</a> if appropriate) that reflect the following:</li> </ul> <p>K-5 is expected to provide one Literacy/ELA lesson and one math lesson each day. Science and Social Studies should be incorporated where possible into ELA and Math.</p> <p>***Design instruction driven by common Proficiencies/Performance Indicators--prioritize high leverage concepts--considering appropriate Formatives and Summatives.</p> |
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### **Arrival and Transportation ([Bussing](#))**

Bussing will be door to door to the greatest extent possible. Students will need to wear facial coverings, be screened prior to boarding the bus and maintain social distancing to the greatest extent possible. There will be a bus monitor on all buses to reinforce the guidelines. Parents will need to remain at bus stops in case the health screening results prohibit the students' boarding of the bus.

Arrival and Dismissal schedules will be communicated by each school separately. The school day in all buildings is an hour and 15 minutes shorter than last year to accommodate staggered arrival and dismissal times.

### **Can students arrive at school early? Will there be after school care?**

No, they cannot arrive early. We need to make sure that all teachers have arrived and are in their classrooms ready to greet students. We do not have a place for students to congregate in the morning.

FHGS (Boys and Girls Club) will have after school care as they have had in previous years. The same health guidelines will apply to those programs as they do during the regular school day. Boys and Girls Club will be open until 5:30pm.

VAC: We just learned that VAC, who usually offers a program after school in one of our classrooms, has decided they will not offer a program this year.

### **Facial Coverings and Distancing**

Mask Parameters-Students and Families (As of August 24, 2020)

1. Masks are required for all Students in the building.
2. Masks are required outside when physical distancing as mandated (as this can change) is not able to be maintained (students should follow the direction of their teacher who will provide updates).
3. Acceptable forms of masks are:
  - a. Cloth face covering 2 ply that cover the nose and go securely below the chin with ear loops, not ties.
  - b. Surgical mask that cover the nose and go securely below the chin pinching the metal insert to form fit over the bridge of the nose
  - c. KN95 masks that cover the nose and go securely below the chin pinching the metal insert to form fit over the bridge of the nose
  - d. N95 masks-mostly for the nurses, but you may use them if you prefer, but they are not necessary unless you are in the presence of someone with COVID like symptoms receiving an aerosolized treatment such as a nebulizer treatment. (Hartford Healthcare, 2020)
  - e. Parents should be introducing masks and teaching children how to safely put them on and off prior to the start of school so they are independent to the extent possible.
  - f. Masks must follow the dress code procedure (no inappropriate words, design, or pictures).
4. Unacceptable forms of Masks:
  - a. Knitted mask
  - b. One layer cloth mask
  - c. Bandanas
  - d. Neck gaiters
  - e. Masks with vents-CDC does not recommend use of masks or cloth masks for source control if they have an exhalation valve or vent (CDC, August, 2020)
5. Face Shields can be added to anyone who would like to add extra protection, but they do not replace wearing a mask and face shields are not necessary if maintaining 6 feet of distance.
6. Exceptions for removing a mask while wearing a face shield:
  - a. Those who have physician orders to not wear a mask in school with documented diagnosis.
  - b. For students who are deaf, hard of hearing or struggle with communication while wearing a mask can remove their mask during direct services with their teacher or speech language pathologist (SLP). Masks with clear panels are recommended for educators providing services to the students. The student will keep on the face shield and as much distance as possible between them while services are provided.
  - c. Students requiring interventions under rule 4500. See the specific guidelines for care during and after interventions for both students and staff.
  - d. Masks need to be washed after every use at the end of the day. Having several on hand will be more convenient.
7. Wearing a mask correctly:
  - a. Wash your hands before putting on your mask
  - b. Put it over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin
  - c. Try to fit it snugly against the sides of your face
  - d. Make sure you can breathe easily (CDC, August, 2020)

8. Students' cloth face coverings should be clearly identified with their names or initials, to avoid confusion or swapping.
9. Students' face coverings may also be labeled to indicate top/bottom and front/back to help them put it on correctly.
10. When not in use, facial coverings should be stored in individually labeled containers or paper bags. Breakaway lanyards can also be utilized for students to wear and clip their mask onto it.
11. Face coverings should be washed:
  - every evening (hand washing with soap water and hanging to dry overnight or washing machine)
  - before being used again if a weekend
  - or if visibly soiled
12. KN95 and N95 masks can be reused after sitting for 3 days in a paper bag. Having three will provide for 1 to always be available for use. If visibly soiled, it should be discarded.
13. Please consult with the District COVID Coordinator, Deborah Hanson, M.Ed., BSN, RN, School Nurse Leader with any questions or concerns. [dhanson@svvvt.org](mailto:dhanson@svvvt.org)

## References

- Agency of Education and Department of Health (August, 2020). A Strong and Healthy Start, Safety and Health Guidance for Reopening Schools, Fall 2020. Retrieved from:*  
<https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-vdh-guidance-strong-healthy-start-school-health-updated-8-1.pdf>
- CDC (August, 2020) How to Wear Masks. Retrieved from:*  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html>
- Hartford HealthCare (2020). Masks Save Lives: Duke Study Confirms Which Ones Work Best. Retrieved From:* <https://hartfordhealthcare.org/about-us/news-press/news-detail?articleid=27691&publicid=395>

**Social Distancing will be 6 feet wherever feasible.**

## Hygiene and Cleaning

Buildings and Grounds staff continue to develop cleaning practices described on [page 18 of the state guidance](#). These include routine cleaning of:

- Common spaces and classrooms
- Frequently touched surfaces on buses, as well as an adequate supply of hand sanitizer on board.
- Frequently touched surfaces such as bathrooms, door handles, rails, and plastic playground equipment.

Cleaning and disinfection processes in the event of a COVID-19 case are described on [page 11 of the state guidance](#).

## Classrooms

Classroom seating will be configured with maximum allowable space between students and whenever possible, desks and tables will face the same direction.

Employees will modify instructional plans to reduce student contact, sharing of materials or equipment, and maintain appropriate social distancing to the greatest extent possible.

### **Personal Items**

We are asking both students and staff to limit the number of personal items that are brought into the classrooms. Please only bring in what is necessary for the school day.

### **Outdoor Recess (Elementary)**

Recess will take place in the elementary and middle school. Masks will not need to be worn if the students are outside and adhering to proper social distancing.

Students may use playground equipment only under the following conditions:

- Plastic and metal playground equipment will be cleaned frequently and routinely over the course of each day.
- Staff will reinforce physical distancing during playground play.
- In cases where social distancing cannot be enforced facial coverings will need to be worn.

### **Visitors, Field Trips and Public Use**

At this time, we are not permitted to have volunteers in the schools. No outside visitors and volunteers except for employees or contracted service providers for the purpose of special education or required support services, as authorized by the school or district.

Field trips are only allowed if the program is able to maintain all health guidance, as well as guidance from the [Agency of Commerce and Community Development](#), as it relates to public outdoor spaces and pools.

Per the Agency of Education Reopening Guidelines school buildings are not available for community use at this time. However, the school grounds are available for use.

### **Hybrid Learning** – Some combination of in-person learning and remote learning.

During the 2020-2021 school year, **Fair Haven Union High School** students will connect with their teacher(s) and receive instruction in-person on alternating days (Blue/White) each week. In-person instruction and remote learning provides students with focused and intentional follow-up in addition to continued learning on content and skill development.

- The remote learning days will be a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning. Instruction will be in-person in addition to self-paced work using Google Classroom.
- Students will be expected to use Google Classroom to access their remote learning.

- Teachers will instruct their classes to students in the classroom and provide instructions for students who are accessing remotely. This provides the ability to support students as needed synchronously for students unable to attend in-person.
- Students that are medically exempt will access their education with the same expectations as all learners on remote learning days.
- Attendance will be taken at the start of class. High School teachers will communicate the use of work artifacts as a means for being “present” for remote days.

## K-12 Remote Access for Medical Exemptions

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| <p><b>Definitions</b></p>                                 | <p>Medical exemptions will provide remote access occurring concurrently, when appropriate, with in-person learning following the school's schedule.</p> <p><u>Remote access for medical exemptions will not be recorded</u> due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Medical exemption remote access requires families commit to the following to ensure a meaningful learning experience while remote.</p>  |
| <p><b>Student and Parent/Guardian time commitment</b></p> | <p>A high level of student oversight, which requires <u>approximately 5 hours</u> per day, much of which will be tied to the school's schedule.</p> <p>The parent/guardian will need to supplement the learning experience for students by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. building from initiating activities-“bell ringer”/Morning Meeting</li> <li>2. building off of synchronous (real-time) direct instruction</li> <li>3. building and supporting guided practice</li> </ol> <p>This requires a time commitment beyond what the educator is providing each day.</p>  |
| <p><b>Parent/Guardian responsibilities</b></p>            | <p>Ensure an environment conducive to learning, free of distractions such as TV and siblings (for example: it will be important to have separate rooms, or at least separate devices with headphones if same-family students are engaging in synchronous learning at the same time).</p> <p>Follow the classroom schedule communicated to you by your student's teacher to ensure that students are attending each class.</p> <p>Assist with lessons as needed.</p> <p>Ensure the completion and timely submission of student work using Google Classroom (3-12) or Seesaw (K-2).</p> <p>Complete a Google Classroom/Seesaw parent tutorial that the teacher provides during the first week of school.</p> <p>Communicate weekly, or more often as needs arise, realizing the</p> |

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|  | <p>teacher can not stop class for other students in order to address a parent concern.</p> <p>Check emails daily and monitor Google Classroom/Seesaw weekly to ensure fidelity of an educator’s curriculum, instruction, and assessments.</p>   |
| <b>Percent of a day on a Chromebook</b>        | <p>About 70% of the work is done on a Chromebook, either viewing a live classroom experience, doing online assignments, or utilizing educational software. This is likely to be a much greater percentage of screen time than with in person learning.</p>  |
| <b>Roles and Responsibilities for Teachers</b> | <p>The teacher will provide as much synchronous teaching/instruction and support as reasonable in the context of the in-person experience. Different types of lesson plans will lend themselves to different types of remote access. Teachers will convey the opportunities for synchronous and remote learning at the beginning of each week through their <i>Learning Chunk</i> posted in Google Classroom or Seesaw. Teachers who elect to provide most of their instruction in a pre-recorded mode are expected to provide at least one face to face contact each week for students with medical exemptions.</p> <p>All teachers will provide office hours (10-15 minutes) for students with remote access due to a medical exemption a minimum of once per week.</p> |

### **Deadline for Medical Exemption**

Any parent requesting a medical exemption for remote learning needs to do so no later than Friday, August 28th. If the medical needs of a family changes during the school year the school will consider a request on a case by case basis.

### **Student Services**

[Research](#) shows the importance of mental and emotional well-being for students and staff, which has both psychological and ultimately academic outcomes. [School counselors](#) will play an extremely important role in the adjustment period when buildings reopen. [Slate Valley’s COVID-19 Student Services](#) (School Counselors, School Psychologists, Home to School Liaisons, School Nurses, School-Based Clinicians) will support school reopening.

### **Students with Special Health and Educational Needs**

Ensuring the physical, emotional and psychological safety of every student is a priority for the safe reopening of all of our Slate Valley schools. We will be systematically considering the heightened risks facing our most vulnerable students and the staff who support them, including but not limited to those with compromised immune systems, impulse control issues, or other behavioral issues or disabilities who cannot follow public health guidelines. We will continue to engage in thoughtful planning with families and experts supporting these students. In these cases, the focus will be on what is reasonable and appropriate in the school building, including the following:

- It may be necessary to plan for transitioning students between options of remote and in person learning.
- There will be designated areas made available for students to have an isolated space to take a break from their mask. There will also be opportunities for students to be supported in taking breaks outside in designated areas.
- School practices will account for special education regulatory guidance, CDC public health guidance, and federal/state guidance, as well as SVUSD school operations.
- We will prioritize mental health and social-emotional support for vulnerable students.
- SVUSD will look for supplemental guidance developed from shared experience around the state, and that issued by the Vermont Agency of Education, in supporting the types of learners who struggle to or are unable to comply with public health requirements..

Students who are eligible for special education and are served through Individualized Education Plans (IEP) will be meeting with their IEP team to determine the support, service or accommodations necessary for the student to access the educational program being offered in that school and at the specific grade level of the student. In most cases, it may be necessary for the IEP team to define the IEP program and services for in-person learning, remote learning and hybrid learning environments. The parent or guardian of each student served on an IEP will be contacted by the special education department/LEA to arrange an IEP meeting to discuss these important determinations.

Students with an identified disability who are protected from discrimination and afforded accommodations through a Section 504 Plan will be meeting with the 504 coordinator/504 team to determine the accommodations necessary for the student to access the general education program. It will be necessary for the team to consider the education program being offered at the specific school and grade level of the student. In most cases, it will be necessary for the team to consider the accommodations necessary for in-person learning, remote learning, and hybrid learning environments. Students with documented health conditions that may impact their participation in the general education environment should be considered for protection under Section 504. Parents or guardians of students with documented health concerns should contact their child's school administration.

## **If Someone Tests Positive for COVID-19**

Anyone that displays any COVID19 symptoms will be sent home immediately, recommended for COVID testing, and School Nurse Leader or Superintendent informed.

The classrooms, bathrooms, etc will be closed and cleansed after 24 hours.

Performance of a test will be decided by the student's medical provider. Being sent to a provider does not guarantee a test will be performed.

The Department of Health does not recommend routine COVID-19 testing of staff or students.

The school nurse or designee will continue to follow up on the student's or staff's symptoms. The student's or staff's return to school will be allowed when the student or staff member has not had a fever (less than 100.4 without fever reducing medication) for 24 hours (or according to

updated recommendations by the VDH) prior to re-admittance **and** has displayed no other symptoms for 10 days.

If a COVID test comes back positive, The School Nurse Leader and Superintendent needs to be called immediately. They in turn, will contact the Vermont Department of Health (the doctor's office and the lab are to do this, but it needs to be done by the school as well).

No symptomatic or COVID-19 positive workers are allowed on site and any worker(s) who have close contact for more than 15 minutes with a worker or any other person who is diagnosed with COVID-19 are required to quarantine for 14 days.

The decision to close schools or certain classrooms for in-person instruction will be made by the superintendent after consulting with the Department of Health. The Department of Health will provide guidance based on a number of factors, including the level of community transmission, the number of students or staff infected and the ability of the school to implement mitigation strategies.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

We have compiled a list of [Frequently Asked Questions](#). These will be updated as new information becomes available.