



Newton County School System

RECOVERY AND REOPENING PLAN FOR THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

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Introduction

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and at the direction of Governor Brian Kemp, the Newton County School System closed on March 16, 2020. Only certain, essential personnel maintained a presence in the schools and facilities. Nevertheless, we have

Vision: Students will be well-rounded and prepared for the future

Mission: Educational excellence for all students

continued to serve our constituents. The system immediately moved to provide social and emotional support to employees, students and their families. Relief efforts were begun, the centerpiece of which has been the student and community feeding programs carried out at numerous locations throughout the county. The school system has endeavored to provide instructional continuity for its students and teachers by providing online instruction and professional development, and by deploying technology devices and mobile hot spots to students and families in need. As the school year concluded, plans were made for the collection and return of school and student-owned materials, graduation options, and year-end close out activities. Throughout this time staff have maintained critical operations including business functions, communications, mail and copy services, and facilities maintenance and repair.

The school system is now preparing for the next phase - the eventual reopening of school for the 2020-2021 school year. That process has begun, and continues to be a collaborative effort with stakeholders, community members, and public health officials. Input has been solicited from all parties and we continue to engage with the Governor’s K-12 Restart Teams for guidance. Planning is comprehensive, systematic and multi-faceted. At its core is the safety and health of students and staff. Wellness screenings, proper hygiene, effective cleaning processes, appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), social-distancing protocols, and reasoned responses to virus flare-ups are integrated into the planning process. Multiple operational and instructional models have been included to provide decision makers timely, relevant options based on ever evolving environmental circumstances. Supply chains and vendors have been identified to support the acquisition of technology, supplies and services to support the chosen strategies. In summary, the school system has developed a reopening plan that is flexible, responsible, adaptable, safety-focused, and that can deliver on the promise embedded in its mission – to provide educational excellence for all students.

Framework for Recovery and Reopening

A framework for response, planning and preparation, and recovery was developed to guide the school system’s efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2019-2020 school year and to prepare for the 2020-2021 school year. The first phase of the framework involved relief and immediate response to the pandemic. Key components of relief and immediate response included providing for instructional continuity, supporting student and family wellness, and ensuring minimum basic operations.

The next two phases of the framework involve planning and preparing for the 2020-2021 school year. Phase 2 includes engaging with students, families, faculty, staff, the community, and other organizations to aid in the planning process. This phase also includes preliminary work to develop instructional models, the review and potential changes to the school calendar, and the continuation of student and family wellness supports. Phase 3 involves finalizing and operationalizing all plans for the next school year, including additional student, family, and staff supports.

The final part of the framework is recovery and reopening. This involves the effective implementation of all plans and the continuation of student and family supports. The framework represents a logical, systematic, data informed, and systemic process for responding to the pandemic and planning for the upcoming school year.

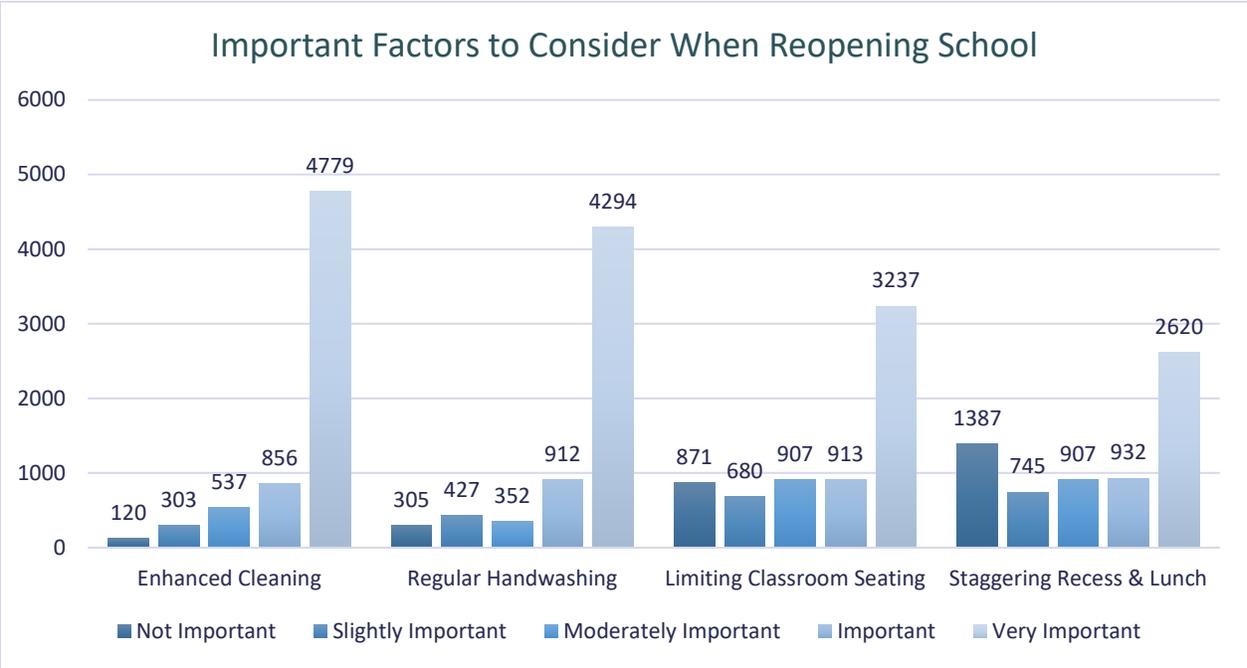
Overview of Framework for COVID-19 Response, Planning and Preparation, and Recovery	
<p>Phase 1 - Relief and Immediate Response <u>Ongoing through August 7, 2020</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide supports for students and families • Establish safety measures • Provide for instructional continuity • Continue minimum basic operations • Provide employee wellness supports • Ensure effective communications 	<p>Phase 2 – Planning (Conceptualize) <u>May 15, 2020 – July 7, 2020</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with students, families, faculty, staff, and community for feedback about a safe school reopening • Engage with the GDOE and Governor’s K-12 Restart Teams • Develop instructional models for the 2020-2021 school year • Review 2020-2021 school calendar options • Continue supports for students and families • Ensure effective communications
<p>Phase 3 – Preparation (Operationalize) <u>June 1, 2020 – Start of School</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize instructional and operational models for the 2020-2021 school year • Finalize technology plans to support student learning • Finalize teacher and staff support plans • Finalize planning for safety precautions • Finalize supply acquisition plans • Finalize employee wellness plans • Finalize emotional and wellness supports for students • Ensure effective communications 	<p>Phase 4 – Recovery & Reopening <u>Start of School</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement all student and family wellness supports • Implement instructional models for the 2020-2021 school year • Implement all teacher and staff supports • Ensure all employee wellness plans are operational • Ensure effective communications

Community & Staff Engagement

One of the school system’s core beliefs is that respectful partnerships among students, staff, parents, and the community are integral to student success. The school system’s framework for response, planning and preparation, and recovery included engaging with the students, families, staff, faculty, and school communities as a first step in developing plans and preparing for the 2020-2021 school year. The school system employed a number of strategies to gather input from all stakeholders including surveys, listening sessions, and collaborative team meetings with school and district leaders. The results of these information gathering activities were carefully analyzed, reviewed, and used to guide the development of instructional and student and family support programs for the next school year. In the following, more information about the efforts to engage the community and staff are provided along with the results of those efforts.

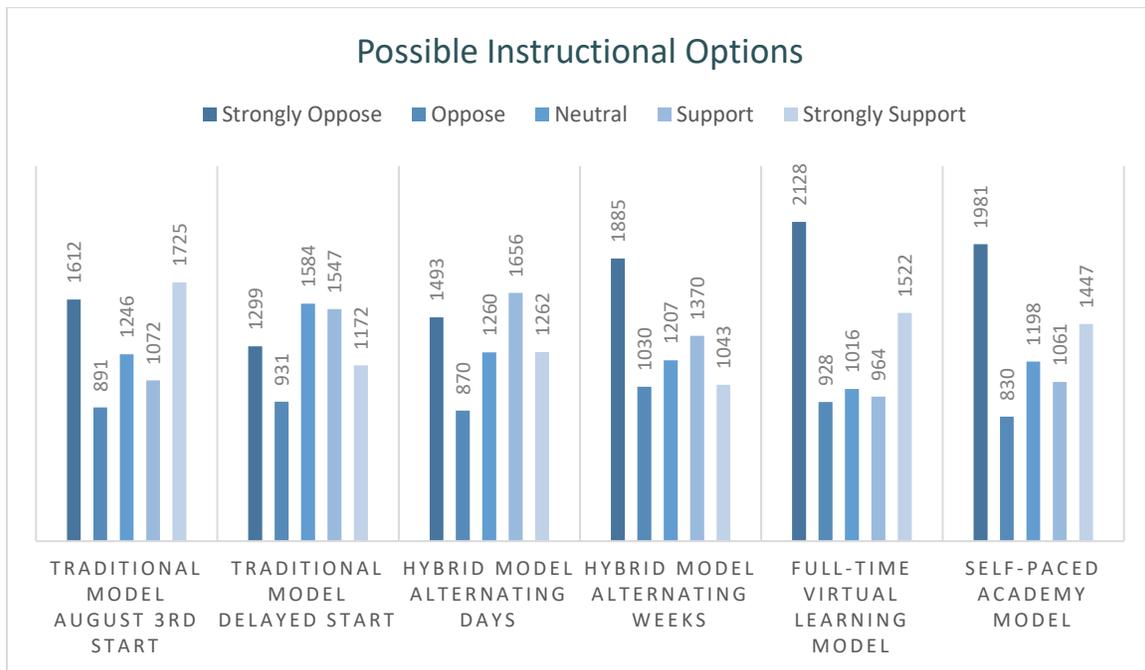
Students and Families

The first of three surveys was designed to gather input from our families (parents, guardians, and students). There were 6,664 responses to this survey. Parents and guardians represented 84.8% of respondents and students represented 15.2%. Students and families identified several important factors to be considered related to the reopening of schools. Important factors included enhanced cleaning practices, regular handwashing, limiting classroom seating, and staggering recess and lunch times which are represented in the following graph.



Respondents also offered insight into what school should look like next year. The options included full-time return to a regular school day, full-time return to a regular school day with a delayed start date, full-time return to an all remote learning model, a self-paced virtual learning academy, a staggered model in

which students attend school and participate in online learning on alternating days, and a staggered model in which students attend school and participate in online learning on alternating weeks. The survey results are depicted in the following graph.



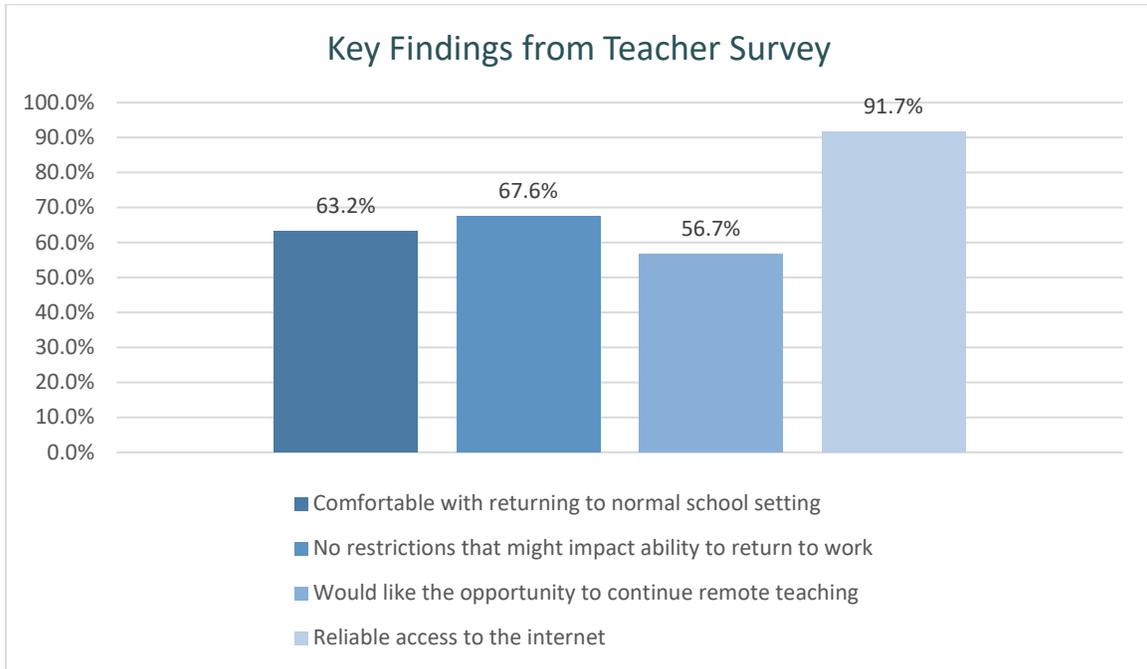
As evidenced in the graph, students and parents have varying notions about which instructional options should be available next school year. The most favorable response (1,725) was associated with a full-time regular start to the school year; however, a significant number (1,612) strongly opposed that approach. Collectively, the data reflect the need for choices related to how students attend school and participate in the learning process. An important element associated with providing varied instructional options is access to childcare. The survey indicated 76% of parents and guardians responding have access to childcare for students who may participate in some form of online learning.

Teachers

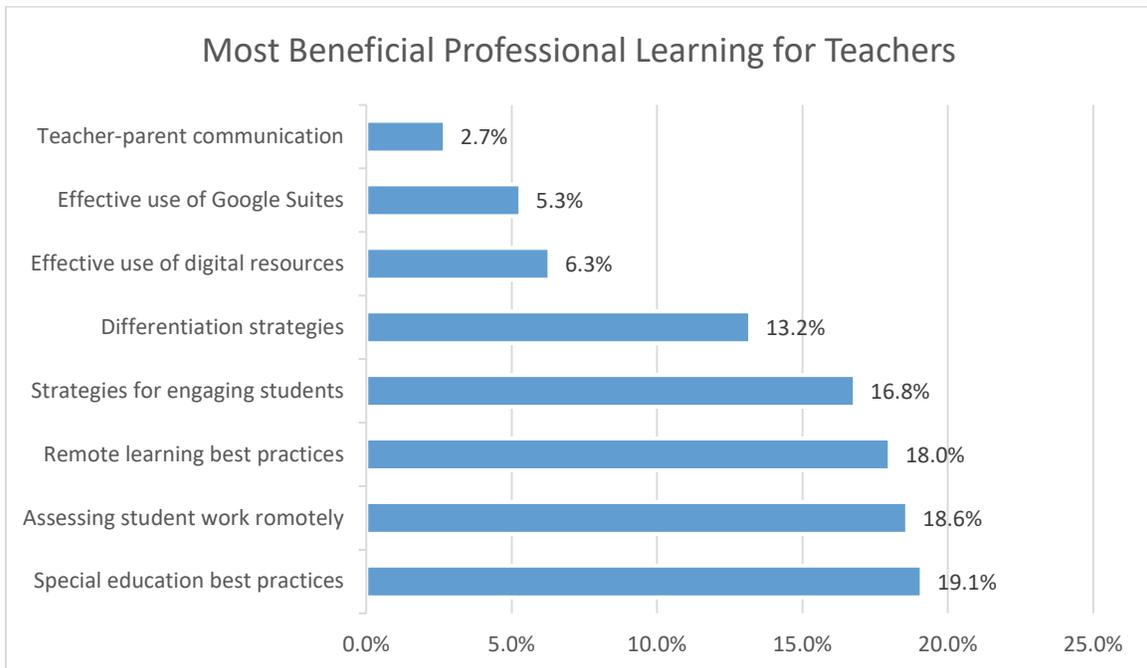
The school system utilized two methods for including faculty and staff input into the planning process; surveys of teachers and staff and collaborative team meetings consisting of school and district leaders. Two surveys gathered information from teachers and other school system staff. It was important to develop a survey specifically for teachers as they are on the instructional frontline and have a unique and important perspective. Survey results include 1,775 responses.

The survey revealed 63.2% of teachers are comfortable with returning to a regular school setting and schedule provided there are no restrictions. Additionally, 67.6% indicated no issues (health or otherwise) that would preclude their return. The survey results from students and families indicated a need for some level of blended or online instruction. The survey revealed 56.7% of teachers indicated they prefer remote teaching and 91.7% reported having reliable access to the internet.

A teacher listening session was conducted on July 2, 2020. The majority of comments and/or concerns from participants were about health and safety measures and the types of instructional models that will be made available. The comments further validated the survey results.

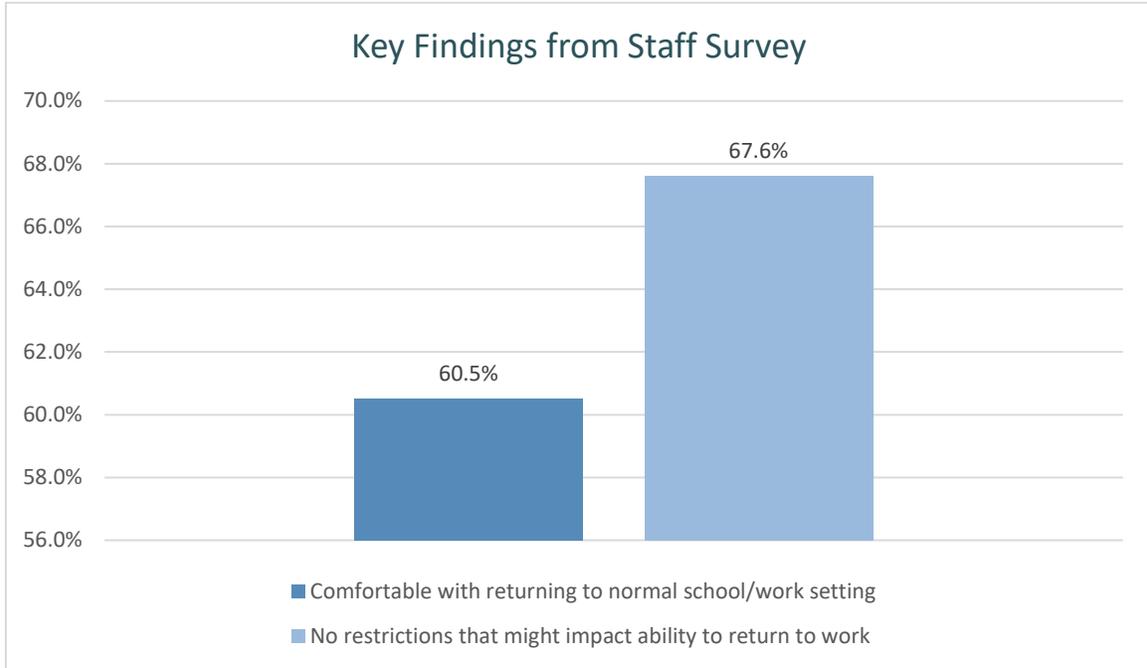


Professional learning to support teachers will need to be aligned with the instructional models utilized. The survey asked teachers to weigh in on the types of professional learning that would be the most beneficial to them in anticipation of the need to provide instruction via different methods and platforms. Their responses are captured in the following graph.



Support Staff

A survey of district staff (excluding teachers) indicated that 60.5% of employees are comfortable returning to a normal school and work setting. Moreover, 67.6% of respondents indicated no issues (health or otherwise) that would prevent them from working during the next school year.



A support staff listening session was conducted on July 2, 2020. The majority of comments and/or concerns from participants were about health and safety measures and the types of instructional models that will be made available. The comments further validated survey results.

Instructional Design Teams

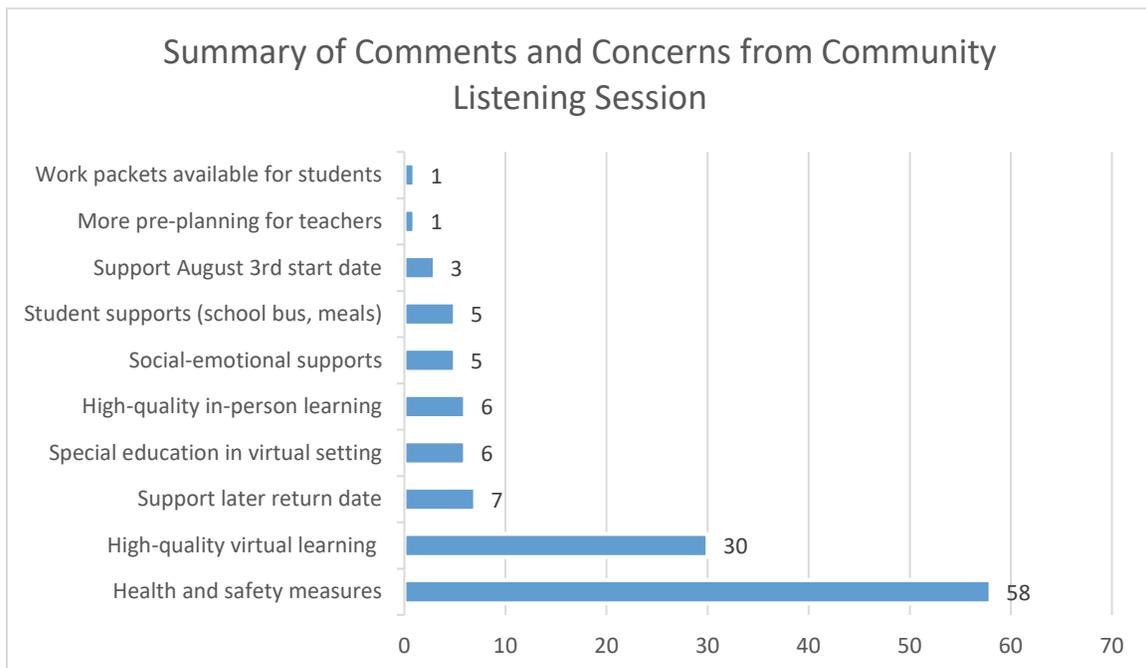
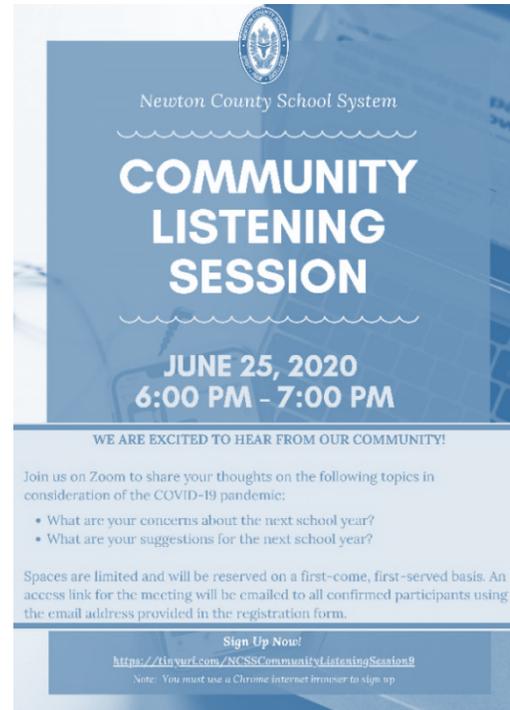
Instructional design teams explored a number of instructional models for the 2020-2021 school year. There was an elementary design team and a secondary design team. Teams consisting of teachers (comprising the highest percentage of representatives on both teams), principals, assistant principals, instructional coaches, district administrators, content specialists, instructional coaches and technology specialists. The design teams met weekly and discussed the pros/cons and opportunities for proposed instructional models. As such, the work of the instructional design team provided the foundation for the development of options for students, including in-person and virtual options. The following guiding principles emerged regarding the development of instructional models for the next school year:

- A traditional learning experience is preferred.
- A remote learning option is needed for families and staff who will not be able to participate in a traditional “bricks-and-mortar” learning experience.
- Teachers and schools leaders will need additional support and expanded professional learning opportunities to support both traditional and virtual instructional models.

- Plans must be developed to ensure appropriate interventions and support are provided for students in all instructional models.

Community

The school system hosted a community listening session on June 25, 2020. Over 122 people participated in the listening session. Participants were asked to share their concerns and suggestions for the next school year in consideration of the COVID-19 pandemic. There were 124 comments and/or suggestions made. Of those, 58 were about health and safety measures (i.e. physical distancing, health screenings, face coverings, handwashing, response to illnesses, and ventilation systems). The next largest number of comments and questions were about virtual learning and the need to provide it. While most comments about virtual learning were about the need to offer it, several participants noted the need for high-quality materials. There were six participants interested in how the school system would meet the needs of special education students in a virtual learning setting. In the following chart, all comments and concerns are organized into 10 categories.



External Recommendations and Guidance

This plan and the recommended procedures are designed to align with the most comprehensive guidance released to date. We are relying on a variety of sources for guidance and specifically aligning our plan with recommended guidelines.

- The Georgia Department of Education, in partnership with the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), has developed guidance to support districts and communities in determining their plans and strategies for reopening schools. [*Georgia’s Path to Recovery for K-12 Schools*](#) provides a tiered approach with clear, actionable steps that are advisable before students and employees return to school buildings, along with guidance that is applicable throughout the 2020-2021 school year.

This approach is built upon the guidance and recommendations of health officials; it is strongly aligned to the reopening guidelines that have been provided by our state and federal leaders; and it’s designed to help districts prioritize the health and safety of students and teachers as they open school buildings and deliver instruction for the 2020-2021 school year.

Georgia’s Path to Recovery for K-12 Schools focuses heavily on the health and physical requirements necessary for reopening school buildings. The Georgia Department of Education will continue to provide guidance and recommendations to districts and schools on navigating the academic, social, and emotional effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on students and employees.

- In May 2020, Governor Brian Kemp and state school Superintendent Richard Woods appointed K-12 restart working groups. The groups are focusing on the following six topics: food, distance learning, internet access and computers, mental health, supplemental learning and facilities, and pupil transportation. Guidance from these groups will be incorporated into this plan as it becomes available.

Georgia’s Path to Recovery for K-12 Schools

Guidance from the Georgia Department of Education & the Georgia Department of Public Health

- Prioritizing Safety**
The guidelines are intended to ensure the safety of students, staff, and families in the fall and beyond.
- Protecting the Vulnerable**
The guidelines specifically address measures to ensure that students and teachers who are medically fragile, or have medically fragile family members, have viable options even as schools reopen for in-person instruction.
- Realistic in the K-12 Setting**
The guidelines were developed as a partnership between Georgia’s Departments of Public Health and Education, to ensure they are achievable in the K-12 setting.
- Guidelines, Not Mandates**
School districts should review the guidance in consultation with their local public health departments and choose which methods to adopt.
- Adaptable to Multiple Scenarios**
Tailored guidance is provided for areas with substantial spread, minimal to moderate spread, and low to no spread of COVID-19. School districts may adapt their plans if the level of spread in the community changes throughout the school year.

Detailed guidance provided on:

- Practicing prevention
- Transporting students
- Entering school buildings
- Serving meals
- Transitioning between classes and spaces within the school
- Conducting large group gatherings
- Supporting teaching and learning
- Protecting vulnerable populations

gadoe.org/K12recovery

- [The Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) offers considerations](#) for ways in which schools can help protect students, teachers, administrators, and staff and slow the spread of COVID-19. Schools are advised to determine, in collaboration with state and local health officials to the extent possible, whether and how to implement these considerations while adjusting to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community.
- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) developed [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for Covid-19](#) based on traditional infection prevention and industrial hygiene practices. It focuses on the need for employers to implement engineering, administrative, work practice controls and personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as considerations for doing so.
- The Academy of Pediatrics developed COVID-19 [Planning Considerations: Return to In-Person Education in Schools](#) to assist in planning for reopening schools.

The school system will continue to monitor the development of public health recommendations, state and local guidance, and the information shared by our own families and employees.

Health & Safety Measures

The school system will be utilizing a multi-faceted approach to mitigating the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Components of the approach include the following: physical distancing and density reduction; health screenings; healthy hygiene practices; cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting; and communication. These components are consistent with the recommendations made by the CDC and other health organizations. Parents and students have also identified enhanced cleaning practices, increased handwashing, and physical distancing as important factors to reopening schools. Collectively, the components represent a clear and systemic plan that can be effectively communicated to students, parents, guardians, and school system staff.



Physical Distancing & Density Reduction

The CDC has identified physical distancing as one of the primary means of avoiding exposure to the virus and slowing the spread of COVID-19. This technique refers to strategically applied interventions that increase the space between people and decrease the frequency of close contact interactions to avoid spreading the virus. Examples of this include increasing the distance between seating assignments, rearranging classrooms to have students facing the same direction, and implementing staggered class changes. Because schools are traditionally dense environments where students and staff gather for several hours of the day, physically distancing strategies must include density reduction/adjustment measures to be effective.

LEVEL OF COMMUNITY SPREAD	RESPONSE
Low/No Community Spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face instruction at full capacity/density while practicing preventative safety and physical distancing measures.
Minimal/Moderate Community Spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory physical distancing guidelines for students, staff and visitors per CDC and DPH recommendation and guidelines. • Gatherings and interactions that place individuals in close proximity will be limited or eliminated. • Schools, administrative offices, and school buses may operate at staggered and reduced capacity, and non-essential visitors to schools and offices will be limited.
Substantial Community Spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted, short-term and extended school closures with limited building occupancy of essential staff members only.

During a period of no/low level of community spread, schools will provide face-to-face instruction at full capacity/density while practicing preventative safety and physical distancing measures. These measures increase significantly during a period of minimal/moderate level of community spread. In this case, there will be mandatory physical distancing guidelines for students, staff, and visitors per CDC and DPH recommendation and guidelines. Gatherings and interactions that place individuals in close proximity will be limited or eliminated. Schools, administrative offices, and school buses will operate at staggered and reduced capacity, and non-essential visitors to schools and offices will be limited. Examples of this include reducing class sizes, alternating student reporting schedules, limiting building access, modifying transportation routes and/or capacity, and adjusting after school and extracurricular activities. The mitigation strategies deployed during this stage will be implemented in direct correlation and response to the level of community-specific outbreaks. During a period of high or substantial community spread, there will be targeted, short-term and extended school closures with limited building occupancy of essential staff members only.

Health Screenings

Health screening and monitoring are essential components for limiting the spread of COVID-19 and ensuring that students and staff remain safe while in our facilities. An important part of keeping our students and staff safe is to actively communicate and require that students and staff members remain home if they are ill or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. Symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and loss of taste or smell. Parents, guardians, and staff members will receive information and training on COVID-19 risk factors and preventative measures.

LEVEL OF COMMUNITY SPREAD	RESPONSE
Low/No Community Spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students, staff and visitors will self-screen at home for symptoms of COVID-19. Anyone with a fever of 100.4 or greater must remain home. • Anyone who develops symptoms on school premises, or presents with a fever of 100.4 will be isolated and sent home.
Minimal/Moderate Community Spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be random and periodic temperature screening at building entrances. • Students, staff members, and visitors will self-screen at home for symptoms of COVID-19. Anyone with a fever of 100.4 or greater should remain home. • Anyone who develops symptoms on school premises, or presents with a fever of 100.4 will be isolated and sent home.
Substantial Community Spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential employees reporting to work during school closures will self-screen at home for symptoms of COVID-19. • There will be mandatory temperature screening at all building entrances. Anyone with a fever of 100.4 or greater must remain home. • Anyone who develops symptoms on school premises or presents with a fever of 100.4 will be isolated and sent home.

Health screening guidelines will correspond with CDC and DPH recommendations and guidelines. These include temperature checks and self-assessment of symptoms for all students, staff, and visitors before entering school buildings or boarding school buses. Parents and guardians play a critical role in the screening of students by checking their children for symptoms of COVID-19 each morning before sending them to school. All students, visitors, and staff members must stay at home if they have symptoms, have tested positive, or had close contact with a person with COVID-19 as determined by the health department. Employees must assess for symptoms each day before reporting to work. Individuals who develop symptoms while on campus will be isolated and sent home.

PPE & Healthy Hygiene Practices

Personal protective equipment (PPE), healthy hygiene and respiratory practices are critical in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Students and staff will be allowed to bring hand sanitizer and wear face coverings per CDC guidelines. The school system will require frequent handwashing of students and staff through the use of scheduled handwashing breaks integrated into their daily schedules. Students will be discouraged from sharing books, materials, supplies, or equipment, including devices and equipment used for athletics and band. Hand sanitizing stations will be strategically placed throughout each facility. Students, staff and families will be educated on ways to prevent contracting and spreading the virus such as covering coughs and sneezes with tissue or elbows, washing and sanitizing hands, avoiding touching faces and practicing physical distancing. These measures will be reinforced through the use of posted signs in classrooms, hallways, entrances and other high traffic areas throughout each facility.

LEVEL OF COMMUNITY SPREAD	RESPONSE
Low/No Community Spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students and staff members are allowed to wear face coverings.
Minimal/Moderate Community Spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students and staff members are expected to wear face coverings, especially in circumstances when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
Substantial Community Spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Essential employees reporting to work during school closures will be required to wear face coverings as tolerable.

Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting

Cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting are part of a broad approach to preventing communicable diseases in schools.

- **Cleaning** removes germs, dirt, food, body fluids, and other material. Cleaning increases the benefit of sanitizing or disinfecting.
- **Sanitizing** reduces germs on surfaces to levels that are safe.
- **Disinfecting** kills germs on surfaces of a clean object.
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates sanitizer and disinfectant chemicals. If you sanitize or disinfect without cleaning first, it will reduce how well these chemicals work and may leave more germs on the surface

Effective cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces such as desks, doorknobs, light switches, faucet handles, stair rails, tables, countertops, and telephones using EPA approved cleaners will significantly decrease the risk of transmission.

Schools will be cleaned daily and high touch surfaces sanitized multiple times throughout the day. Cleaning and disinfecting protocols will be used in computer labs, media centers, and athletic facilities. The school system will continue to ensure that cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitization procedures align with CDC and DPH guidelines using Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved cleaners. Sanitizing and deep cleaning of schools and administrative offices will take place on weekends and school holidays.

Response to Illness

If a student or staff member develops signs of COVID-19, he or she will be immediately separated from others until they can leave. While waiting to leave, the individual will wear surgical mask. The staff member or student's parent will inform the school immediately if there is a positive test result for COVID-19. If the student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, the school system will follow CDC guidelines on cleaning and disinfecting affected areas and follow the DPH guidelines for notifying the school community.

The school system will follow CDC guidance on allowing students and staff to return to school after having COVID-19. A staff member or student who had signs of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 can return to school or work when:

- At least three days (72 hours) have passed since recovery – defined as no fever without the use of medications and improvement in respiratory signs like cough and shortness of breath; **AND**
- At least 10 days have passed since signs first showed up, **OR**
- It has been at least three days (72 hours) since recovery **AND** a health care provider has certified that the individual does not have suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

If a person believes they have had close contact to someone with COVID-19, but they are not sick, they should watch their health for signs of fever, cough, shortness of breath, and other COVID-19 symptoms during the 14 days after the last day they were in close contact with the person sick with COVID-19. They should not go to work, child care, school, or public places for 14 days.

Plan to Address Positive Cases or Increased Community Spread

If a student, teacher, staff member, or visitor tests positive for COVID-19, the school system will follow the guidance of the local health department regarding necessary school closures, home quarantine or isolation requirements and close contact notification protocol. The health department will determine whether a closure is warranted, the length of the closure, and the number of schools impacted based on the specific incident and risk level within the community. Based on the level of community spread of the virus, the health department and other state or federal health officials may prescribe additional mass closures. If a closure is ordered by state or local health officials, students will transition to the virtual learning model platform to ensure instructional continuity. Cleaning and disinfecting of affected areas will take place following CDC and DPH guidance.

Communication about Health & Safety Measures

The school system will create a centralized communication team to ensure that all stakeholders remain well-informed during this rapidly evolving situation. Information and updates to families and other stakeholders will be shared through multiple platforms including phone calls, emails, the school website, and social media outlets. Stakeholders will be able to quickly access relevant information such as school system updates, response or prevention measures, response to frequently asked questions, common preventative measures for families, links to external information sources such as the CDC and DPH, and local emergency contacts. Targeted social media and communication campaigns will be used to further educate stakeholders on prevention strategies. Signage will also be placed in schools and other schools system buildings to share information about how to reduce the spread of COVID-19.



Additional Facility Safety Measures

Several additional safety protocols will protect the health of students and staff. These measures address facility concerns and include visitor protocols, community use of school buildings, water systems, and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems. Information about each of these protocols is included in the following.

Visitor Protocols

The school system strives to create a welcoming environment for all visitors. During this unprecedented time, we will continue to welcome visitors into the schools on a limited basis. Personal protective equipment (PPE) and healthy hygiene and respiratory practices are critical in preventing the spread of COVID-19. During minimal/moderate and substantial levels of community spread only those visitors who are essential, have an appropriate face covering, and pass a health screening will be permitted in the school system's schools and facilities.

LEVEL OF COMMUNITY SPREAD	RESPONSE
Low/No Community Spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors are allowed to wear face coverings.
Minimal/Moderate Community Spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only visitors/workers performing essential work will be granted access to facilities. • Visitors will be required to wear face coverings. • Must comply with all health screening requirements.
Substantial Community Spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only visitors/workers performing essential work will be granted access to facilities. • Visitors will be required to wear face coverings. • Must comply with all health screening requirements.

Community Use of School Buildings

To maintain safe and controlled access to buildings, as well as to prioritize cleaning and disinfecting, community use of school buildings will be limited to preexisting contracts and programs providing direct support to students.

Water Systems

Handwashing is a critical activity to maintain good personal hygiene and the current pandemic has amplified the importance of handwashing. The cleanliness of hand washing sinks is critical as well. We are cleaning all student and adult handwashing sinks multiple times per day, with an EPA approved disinfectants.

Newton County Schools strive to make drinking water readily available to students. Drinking water fountains are located throughout the buildings. The CDC recommends students and staff bring their own water bottles, to minimize use and touching of water fountains. To encourage that, water fountains will be temporarily disabled and students may bring water from home or use a bottle filling stations

HVAC Systems

Heating and air conditioning systems are a critical component in providing safe and clean building environments. The design of each HVAC system includes the introduction of outside air into the building, as recommended by the CDC. We ensure this fresh air intake functionality through regular preventive maintenance activities.

In their guidance [COVID-19 Employer Information for Office Buildings](#), the CDC recommends increased air filtration. Increased filtration means that the filter removes smaller particles from the building’s recirculated air. Increasing the filter rating throughout the district from (Minimum Efficiency Reporting Values (MERV) 10 to MERV 13 will vastly reduce the number of airborne particles that pass through the filter, creating improved air quality within the buildings.

Instructional Models & Supports

Through an extensive community engagement process, the use of collaborative instructional design teams, and review and adherence to external recommendations and guidance, three instructional options for the next school year have emerged. These models reflect the kind of flexibility that will be required as the school system works to respond to evolving challenges associated with COVID-19. The three options are summarized in the following chart.

SUMMARY OF INSTRUCTIONAL OPTIONS	
<p>OPTION 1 Traditional In-Person Model (PK-12)</p>	<p>Students attend school in the traditional manner subject to changes as determined by the level of spread of COVID-19 in the community (as determined by the Georgia Department of Health). There are three scenarios in this model determined by the level of spread of COVID-19 which could affect all schools or select schools.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Low/no community spread: Students will report to school for in-person learning. Minimal/moderate community spread: There are two strategies available that will be selected after consultation with the local health agency: <u>Strategy 1:</u> Students will attend school in-person with more strict physical distancing protocols in place. <u>Strategy 2:</u> Students will attend school on alternating days during the week and participate remotely on other days. Substantial community spread: Students will attend school remotely.
<p>OPTION 2 School-Based Virtual Model (PK-12)</p>	<p>Students attend remotely in their normal classes offered in the traditional instructional model.</p>
<p>OPTION 3 Self-Paced Virtual Academy Model (6-12)</p>	<p>Students complete their work on their own time and engage with teachers when support is needed/requested.</p>

Option 1: Traditional In-Person Instructional Model (PK-12)

The model of school has an intended goal of providing in-person learning opportunities for students. This model is the most well-known model for learning. Students attend school in-person and on campus five days a week and learn in the classroom with the support of highly qualified teachers who design learning, provide instruction and ongoing feedback, and support rich interaction and collaboration. Parents, students, and the school system’s instructional design team strongly supported this model. It is important to note that the traditional model is offered contingent upon the following levels of community

transmission of COVID-19 as determined by the Georgia Department of Public Health. The response to the three levels of community spread are reflected in the following chart.

LEVEL OF COMMUNITY SPREAD	RESPONSE
Low/No Community Spread	Students will report to school for in-person learning on a normal operating schedule. A variety of health and safety measures will be in place to protect students, staff, and the community.
Minimal/Moderate Community Spread	<p>Students will report to school based on one of two strategies that will be selected from in consultation with the local health agency:</p> <p><u>Strategy 1</u> - Students report to school every day with enhanced health and safety measures in place.</p> <p><u>Strategy 2</u> - Students report to school two full days a week (e.g., Tuesday/Thursday or Wednesday/ Friday). Students would be provided assignments to support their learning on the days in which they do not report to school that could include paper, pencil, virtual learning, or a combination. One day each week will be used for teacher planning and professional learning. Students will not report to school, distance learning will continue.</p>
Substantial Community Spread	All students will attend classes and complete work remotely.

Option 2: School-Based Virtual Model (PK-12)

In the school-based virtual model, instruction is delivered to students who are not at the school site. Students are taught by a school system teacher, who will follow the district’s curriculum maps and use virtual learning software. This option requires heavy use of instructional technology, including digital tools that are currently available in our classrooms (cameras, digital meeting platforms, and learning management systems). This online model leverages the strengths of teachers and staff in supporting the learning success of students.

Option 3: Self-Paced Virtual Academy Model (6-12)

The school system will offer a 6-12 online learning academy, Newton Online Academy, which is aligned to the Georgia Standards of Excellence. This self-paced virtual academy combines the benefits of a traditional school with the flexibility and personalization that online learning offers. Our competency-based learning approach allows students to move faster or slower through the material, depending on their individual skills and knowledge. Students will have the freedom to adapt their schedules to accommodate their other interests. They can succeed regardless of time, place, and learning style.

Students attending the Newton Online Academy will receive instruction via a virtual learning platform. Students will not be taught by a Newton County School System teacher; however, educators from within the district will monitor student attendance, track progress during the course, and support each student during his or her learning experience. Parents will enroll their student on an annual basis, with the option

of returning to the base school after the first semester. It is critical that parents are committed to playing a strong supportive role to ensure success of the online program from home. In summary, key components include:

- Tuition-free, online learning from home for students in grades 6-12
- Virtual platform for instruction
- Georgia standards-based curriculum
- Goal setting and weekly progress monitoring
- Virtual tutoring through *Zoom* by appointment
- Social Emotional Learning support
- Gifted, EL, and SWD supports
- Infinite Campus tracking of attendance and grading

Selecting an Instructional Model

The school system will provide parents and students a two-week window in July to select the school experience for their student for the first semester of the 2020-2021 school year. The student may select either a traditional, in-person learning experience or a virtual option. The decision is binding for the entire first semester of the school year and students cannot alter their learning experience until the end of the semester.

Teaching & Learning Supports

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an opportunity for the school system to approach the delivery of instruction in unique and diverse ways. Our goal is to provide equitable opportunities for all students to receive high-quality instruction. Virtual learning has allowed us to maximize the use of technology in all its formats to effectively meet learners' needs and equip staff in their delivery of instruction. During times where virtual learning is required to provide continuity of learning, the school system is prepared to provide a myriad of teaching and learning supports for all three instructional models.

Primary Technology Tools for Virtual Learning

The school system has a number of technology tools that, used together, provide robust support to students participating in virtual learning and enhance support for students who attend school in a traditional setting.

Canvas - Learning management platform

Edgenuity – Online courses and curriculum

ViewPath - Video interactive window (access to recorded teacher lessons)

SAFARI Montage - Learning object repository

Zoom - Video conferencing tool

Microsoft 365, Google G-Suites - Instructional learning tools

Technology Platforms, Tools, and Supports

A variety of virtual instructional resources is available to support teachers, students, and parents.

- Learning Management Platform
Teachers will utilize the Canvas learning management platform as the primary means of instructional focus. All teachers will fully utilize the features of the online learning platform which will serve as a repository of resources, forum for discussions, means for communication, an avenue to deliver and submit assignments, and/or platform for assessments. Teachers will use the platform to support, enhance, and continue student learning that occurs in the face-to-face physical setting.
- Online Courses and Curriculum
Edgenuity Courseware provides online courses and curriculum which are aligned to state standards. Platform provides direct-instruction videos, performance tasks, and assessments to engage students and ensure subject-area mastery.
- Video Conferencing Tools
Teachers will utilize web-based communication tools that allow teachers and learners to video conference, make calls, and deliver live webinar-style lessons to increase educational opportunities for learners in and outside of the traditional classroom. In addition, learners can participate in virtual field trips and author presentations with other students across the globe without leaving their seats. Learners will be able to connect with other students, increase their knowledge, and interact with other cultures worldwide on tools such as *Skype*, *Zoom*, and *Cisco Webex*.
- Instructional Learning Tools
Teachers will utilize a variety of tools that can be used in the physical or virtual classroom to support student learning, ranging from traditional word processing to high-tech options that allow creation and collaboration. Thousands of digital instructional resources have been created with the purpose of giving autonomy to the student, encouraging collaboration, and fostering effective communication between teachers and learners. Tools that Newton County Schools support are *Microsoft Office 365*, *Google G-Suite for Education*, *Discovery Education*, and *Safari Montage/ViewPath*.
- Technology Device Check-Out
To improve the equitable access of technology in the school district, the Newton County School System will provide access to wireless internet hotspots for families with students in grades K-12. Devices will be distributed upon request, and parents will participate in a Device Checkout Orientation Session.
- Newton County School System (NCSS) YouTube Channel
Teachers will utilize the NCSS Technology *YouTube* Channel to access online videos and tutorials to enhance teaching and learning, on-demand. YouTube is available using any web-based device and is free and accessible at all times.
- Technology Help Desk
Newton County School System will have technicians available to assist students, parents, and teachers with virtual learning technical concerns. Contact techsupport@newton.k12.ga.us for assistance.

Professional Learning

Professional learning for the district's educators continues to be a priority. Our offerings continue to include traditional items while embracing the challenges educators now face as we teach children under new and different circumstances. Professional learning classes this year will focus on standards-based instruction; the use of technology in a virtual learning classroom; culturally-relevant instructional practices; best practices in addressing mental health; and social and emotional learning. Additionally, teachers will continue to have an opportunity to take advantage of courses within the learning management system.

Family Engagement

Family engagement is a cornerstone of student academic achievement. Recognizing that students and families need opportunities for support, a robust set of modules will be available to assist families with technology usage, navigating the particulars of virtual instruction, social and emotional learning, and mental health challenges.

Student Supports

The school system provides a wide range of supports to students. These supports include a comprehensive system of social and emotional supports, health services, access to grades, extra-curricular activities, nutritious meals, and transportation services. The following describes how each support function is a critical component of the district's recovery and reopening plan.

Social and Emotional Supports

As we plan for the next school year, the social-emotional well-being of students, their families, and staff is a priority. A variety of flexible resources and supports will be available that address a range of student needs. Each new school year brings excitement. It can also cause students and parents to be anxious. This is particularly true in this unprecedented time. The effects of COVID-19 have had an impact on students, families, and school system staff members across Georgia. These universal impacts have heightened the need for learning environments that are welcoming to and supportive of all students. The school system has carefully considered how to address the needs of all students to include the specific needs of some students with special circumstances such as homelessness, disability, foster care placement, low-income, and children of migrant families.

We can help students weather this crisis through recognizing and responding to their emotions and leaning on positive, prosocial relationships. Social-emotional learning (SEL) is critical to re-engage students, support adults, rebuild relationships and school communities, and create equitable learning environments for all students. The school system will offer a variety of resources to support learning as the transition back-to-school begins.

24/7 Access to Social-Emotional Supports

Students and families will have access to an online social-emotional program that offers videos and resources to help students achieve academic, behavioral, and social-emotional success. This program will be instrumental in ensuring all students, particularly those participating in virtual learning and in the online academy, have immediate access to these types of resources.

School Counselors

Students will have online and in-person access to school counselors who are available to work with students on academic, emotional, and social concerns that impact student success. In support of the whole child, the counseling program will be critical in monitoring the emotional well-being of students as they adjust and adapt to virtual modes of instruction. All schools have a counseling department equipped to support the diverse needs of the students whom they serve. Additionally, individual and group sessions are available and facilitated by trained professional counselors.

Social Workers

Students will have online and in-person access to social workers who are available to work with students and families with concerns that may affect student success, such as academic, behavior management, mental health, and social-emotional concerns. As an instrumental component in the overall success of

our students, social workers will support families with concerns that may impact student learning. Five social workers support all schools and local agencies to provide wrap-around services for the students and families of Newton County.

The Georgia Apex Program

Through the *Apex Program*, *Viewpoint Health* provides 11 clinicians to serve students and families in the Newton County School System. Students receive face-to-face mental health counseling services both in person and virtually, by a licensed clinician. When appropriate, family counseling is provided to strengthen the student's support system, thereby increasing the opportunity for academic success.

Purposity

Purposity is a program designed to assist students and families in need of general supplies to support student achievement. The school system's counselors and social workers identify the needs of students and families (e.g. school supplies, clothes) and those needs are forwarded to *Purposity*. A description of the need is posted, which enables anyone with the downloadable app to click on a link and donate to meet that need. It's a simple and easy way for people to help our students and families who need their support.

Youth Mental Health First Aid

District administrators and other school staff have participated in *Youth Mental Health First Aid* training to support our students' emotional well-being. *Youth Mental Health First Aid* is designed to teach individuals how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. *Youth Mental Health First Aid* is primarily designed for adults who regularly interact with young people. This 8-hour training gives adults who work with youth the skills they need to reach out and provide initial support to students who may be developing a mental health problem and help connect them to the appropriate care. Topics covered during the training include anxiety, depression, substance use, disorders in which psychosis may occur, disruptive behavior disorders (including AD/HD), and eating disorders.

No Place for Hate

For the second consecutive year, the school system earned the designation as a *No Place for Hate* system by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), as each school in the district participates in the program. *No Place for Hate* is an initiative of the ADL offered free to schools. This initiative is a PK–12 school climate improvement framework for combatting bias, bullying, and hatred, leading to long-term solutions for creating and maintaining a positive and equitable climate. The *No Place for Hate* initiative is designed to rally the entire school around the goal of creating a welcoming community committed to stopping all forms of bias and bullying. Upon completion of the required program components, schools receive a *No Place for Hate* banner that can be proudly displayed in the school.

Student Services

The state health emergency and global pandemic brought upon by the COVID-19 outbreak not only disrupted academic services, but also other important services we provide for families and students. With assistance and guidance from other agencies and associations, the student services department has made adjustments and provided guidance for recovering and restarting many of the disrupted services.

Nurses and Student Health Services

All schools in the district have a full-time nurse on staff. The nurses in the schools assist with medication delivery, injury triage, and training, as well as other health-related needs. As it relates to COVID-19, school nurses will assist in screening individuals and designating an isolation area for persons who have exhibited initial symptoms. In the event that the school nurse is notified of confirmed COVID-19 cases, they will report these cases to the local health department and appropriate district personnel.

Student Registration

Typically, student registration will begin two weeks prior to students beginning classes. Registration and enrollment is completed at the schools. An online registration process is being established as soon as possible. When online registration becomes available, parents will be able to register their children and upload the required documents to the online platform. School registrars will notify parents when the registration applications have been fully processed.

Presently, the 2020-21 registration packet can be found on school system's website. Parents can complete the enrollment packet and gather the required documents in preparation for registration prior to school beginning.

Canvas and Gradebook

In an effort to eliminate duplicate data entry by instructional staff, the school system will provide "grade pass-back." This tool will allow information that is entered into *Canvas* to be passed into the *Infinite Campus Gradebook* for the 2020-21 school year. Canvas will send any assignment, graded discussion, or quiz that includes a check mark in the "Sync to SIS option." If the "Sync to SIS" option is not checked the items will not pass to Infinite Campus.

Athletics

The Georgia High School Association has provided guidance regarding return to sport activities for Georgia high schools. The school system athletic director and school administration teams meet bi-weekly to discuss any updates to the guidance from GHSA and make adjustments to the school system's guidance. Although the GHSA does not govern middle school sports, the same guidelines are used for middle school sports. The guidance is disseminated to all schools and coaches. Parents and athletes are required to sign acknowledgement of the regulations prior to participation in the activities.

Band, Chorus, Dance, Cheer, and Other Extra-Curricular Programs

Newton County officials have created marching band guidelines by referencing the guidelines from GHSA and the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) music committee. The school system's guidance is disseminated all activity leaders; parents and athletes are required to sign acknowledgement of the regulations prior to participation in the activities.

Student Discipline and Virtual Learning

The school system's Code of Conduct outlines technology acceptable use and the consequences for violation of the acceptable use guidelines. The code of conduct addresses the use of digital means to violate certain rules and regulations (i.e., bullying, threatening, academic dishonesty).

21st Century/ASAP Afterschool Program

The school system will continue to offer the *21st Century/ASAP Afterschool Program* at select schools. The afterschool program will operate in accordance with the daily instructional schedule. Additionally, afterschool services provided will follow the district protocols and guidance from the CDC and the DPH. Staffing needs and supports will be determined by student enrollment in the program. The *21st Century/ASAP Afterschool Program* design may be adjusted based on future guidance from the Georgia Department of Education.

School Nutrition Program

The school nutrition program helps to provide food security every school day for students in the district. School meals provide a powerful educational support system by improving behavior, the ability to focus and academic performance. School meals are also an important source of nutrition for all school-age children. During the COVID-19 pandemic our goal is to provide meal accessibility to as many students as possible in addition to continuing to serve our students healthy meals this school year.

Meal Service for Traditional In-Person Model

For students participating in the traditional in-person instructional model, meal service will vary with the level of community spread as determined by the school system in consultation with the local public health department. The meal delivery methods, based on community spread, are reflected in the following chart.

LEVEL OF COMMUNITY SPREAD	RESPONSE
Low/No Community Spread	Students will pick up meals by going through the serving lines in the cafeteria. The following safety precautions will be in place: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employees will plate all food items (no self-service option)• Students will practice physical distancing while in the line• Students will be spaced out while eating in the cafeteria or outside• Routine cleaning of high touched areas• Point of sale key pads will not be used
Minimal/Moderate Community Spread	Students will pick up meals by going through the serving lines in the cafeteria and return to their classrooms. The following safety precautions will be in place: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employees will plate all food items (no self-service option)• Students will practice physical distancing while in the line• Routine cleaning of high touched areas• Students learning from home will be given meals to take home and eat when not in school.• Point of sale keypads will not be used
Substantial Community Spread	Students will be able to pick up meals from drive-thru school sites or bus stop delivery locations

Meal Service for Virtual Learning Models

Students who participate in the virtual learning models will be able to pick up meals from any school or bus stop delivery location.

School Nutrition Food Safety Guidance

School nutrition professionals are committed to providing healthy, nutritious meals to children. Due to the nature of the work, employees must follow certain food safety guidelines outlined below and will take additional precautions during the pandemic.

- Employees must follow reporting requirements specified by the *Georgia Food Code* for all symptoms and diagnoses of food borne illnesses. Employees are also required to report symptoms of COVID-19 to their supervisor.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) must be utilized when performing applicable job duties. PPE include single-use gloves, cutting gloves, rubber gloves, goggles, masks, etc.
- All employees must follow *Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point* (HACCP) policies. HACCP is a management system in which food safety is addressed through the analysis and control of biological, chemical, and physical hazards from raw material production, procurement and handling, to manufacturing, distribution and consumption of the final product. These policies include outlines for:
 - Careful hand-washing and glove use,
 - Prevention of cross contamination when dealing with different food products,
 - Prevention of cross contact when dealing with allergens,
 - Ensuring the proper temperatures of hot and cold food items,
 - Receiving food that is in proper temperature and condition,
 - Monitoring expiration dates and food quality,
 - Organization and cleanliness of storage areas,
 - Practicing good personal hygiene,
 - Documenting food safety procedures using logs and other forms, and more.
- Hands must be washed frequently including but not limited to
 - When reporting to work
 - When returning to the kitchen
 - After using the restroom (wash hands in restroom and again in the kitchen)
 - After coughing, sneezing, or touching face or hair
 - After taking the trash out
 - Before putting on gloves, and when changing gloves
 - Any time hands or gloves become soiled or contaminated
- Eating in any part of the kitchen, store room, or behind the serving line is prohibited.
- Drinks must be in disposable, non-spill containers with lids and a drinking straw and kept in an area as designated by management. Containers should be discarded daily and when soiled.
- Employees must wash, rinse, and sanitize food contact surfaces, equipment, utensils, sinks, tables, thermometers, and carts before and after their use.

Pupil Transportation

Providing transportation for students is a critical part of the traditional instructional model. The school bus is often the first and last point of contact with the school system for most students each day and plays a key role in school operations. As such, our protocols are aimed at minimizing the spread of COVID-19 and protecting both students and staff. In the following, the processes for keeping our students and staff safe are reviewed. These processes include enhanced cleaning of buses and limiting the number of students on the school bus when the level of community spread is determined to be mild/moderate by the Georgia Department of Public Health.

Transportation Services for In-Person Traditional Instructional Model

The pupil transportation services provided to students participating in the traditional instructional model will be determined by the level of COVID-19 spread in the community as outlined below.

LEVEL OF COMMUNITY SPREAD	RESPONSE
Low/No Community Spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning and disinfecting procedures will be followed. • Physical distancing will be practiced as ridership allows (Ridership will be reduced by the number of students participating in the remote learning model or online academy model). • Parents will assess their children for fever and other symptoms each morning. • School bus drivers and monitors will self-screen for symptoms each morning before reporting to work. • Students and staff with fevers of 100.4 or greater, or exhibiting other signs of illness will not be allowed to ride the bus.
Minimal/Moderate Community Spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning and disinfecting procedures will be followed. • Students and staff will be strongly encouraged to wear masks and sanitize hands while on the school bus. • Students will be required to physically distance at bus stops and on the bus as allowable. • Student ridership may be reduced by 50% by implementing an alternating schedule for students • Parents will assess their children for fever and other symptoms each morning. • School bus drivers and monitors will self-screen for symptoms each morning before reporting to work. • Students and staff with fevers of 100.4 or greater, or exhibiting other signs of illness will not be allowed to ride the bus.
Substantial Community Spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning and disinfecting procedures will be followed. • School buses will not transport students; however, will assist the school nutrition program with meal delivery for students.

Cleaning & Disinfecting

In all stages of community spread, cleaning and disinfecting remain at the core of our pupil transportation pandemic plan. School buses will be cleaned after morning and afternoon routes and windows will be opened as frequently as possible (weather permitting) to allow for additional ventilation and airflow to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Cleaning will focus on high touch surfaces such as seats, handrails, steering wheel, windows and other fixtures. Drivers will be responsible for wiping down the seats and handrails after every run. Deep cleaning will take place when school buses return to parking locations after the morning and afternoon routes. School buses will be equipped with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, cleaners and disinfectant sprays, gloves and other appropriate PPE. School bus drivers will wear face coverings and students will be strongly encourage to wear face coverings.

Health Screening

An essential component of our transportation plan involves the daily screening of students and staff for symptoms of COVID-19 before boarding the school bus. Parents will assess their children for fever and other symptoms each morning. School bus drivers and monitors will self-screen for symptoms each morning before reporting to work. Students and staff with fevers of 100.4 or greater, or exhibiting other signs of illness will not be allowed to ride the bus.

Registration for Transportation Services

A parent or guardian must register for pupil transportation services for the 2020-2021 school year. Students will be routed to their primary address. The school system will provide parents and students a two-week window in July to select from one of the three instructional models. Parents and students will also be asked if they need transportation services. This process, the routing of buses based on confirmed ridership, will allow resources to be reallocated in a way that provides for greater social distancing on buses.

Human Resources

The COVID-19 pandemic is impacting all employees. Employees are concerned about their work environments, health care plans, and policies related to sick leave and other forms of leave. Effective communication of expectations and avenues for support are critical components of preparing for the next school year. The following provides information about returning to work, the employee assistance program, and the *Families First Coronavirus Response Act* (FFCRA).

Workforce Readiness

Survey data collected by the school district indicated that 67.6% of all staff have no issues (health or otherwise) that would prevent their return to normal work schedule and setting. Systems will be developed to determine workforce readiness prior to the start of school and on a daily basis throughout the school year.

Guidelines for Reporting to Work

All employees will be responsible for adhering to the following requirements:

- Employees must assess for symptoms of COVID-19 before reporting to work. Symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and loss of taste or smell. Employees exhibiting signs of illness, including a fever of 100.4 or greater, must notify their supervisor and stay home.
- Employees must always wear gloves and masks when handling or distributing food.
- Employees must utilize personal protective equipment (PPE) as available and appropriate to the function of work being performed.
- Employees must maintain six feet of distance from others and practice physical distancing as work duties permit. Handshaking and other unnecessary person-to-person contact are strongly discouraged.
- Employees must not share workstations, tools, or equipment without cleaning and sanitizing with disinfectant between uses. This includes pens, phones, masks, headsets, etc.
- Employees must increase the frequency of cleaning and sanitizing commonly touched surfaces with disinfectant.
- Employees must physically distance when taking breaks together. Breaks must be staggered to prevent gathering in the break room where social distancing is not possible. Employees must not share food or utensils.
- Employees must cover coughs and sneezes and avoid touching their faces.
- Employees must wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The *Employee Assistance Program* (EAP) is sponsored by *Mutual of Omaha* and is an employer-paid program that provides resources to assist with personal and job-related issues. EAP improves the productivity and well-being of employees, resulting in an improved workplace culture. The school system

offers this benefit free to all employees and you can also use the service for your dependents. *Mutual of Omaha* provides an EAP website that includes important information and resources for employees on a variety of topics including: emotional well-being, healthy lifestyles, family and relationships, legal and financial issues, and work/life transitions.

Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)

The *Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)* requires Newton County School System as well as certain other employers to provide employees with paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. These provisions apply in circumstances where the employee is not receiving normal pay due to qualifying COVID-19 related issues as listed below. These provisions are effective from April 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020. Employees who test positive for COVID-19 or one of the other qualifying conditions under FFCRA, will be informed to email the HR department at hrefmla@newton.k12.ga.us to initiate the request. The employee will receive an email with a link to the form to complete it electronically. If the employee is unable to communicate due to illness, the human resources department personnel will initiate the process for them.

Substitute Teachers

Substitutes will continue to serve in our schools and provide coverage when teachers are absent in accordance with the Guidelines for Reporting to Work policy. Substitutes will be provided additional guidance and safety protocols to ensure that they are able to adhere to school and district expectations. They will also be required to complete *SafeSchools* training courses on *Coronavirus Awareness* and *Managing Stress and Anxiety* prior to being able to accept substitute assignments during the 2020-2021 school term. Substitutes will not be allowed to work if they are ill or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. They must assess for symptoms of COVID-19 before reporting to school. Symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and loss of taste or smell. Substitutes exhibiting signs of illness, including a fever of 100.4 or greater, must notify the substitute administrator and appropriate school designee and stay home.

Finance and Supply Acquisition

During the next school year, the school district will strive to continue to provide high-quality learning experiences, in-person and virtually, for students. Most importantly, the implementation of a wide range of precautions to protect the health and safety of students and staff is required. To achieve these goals, careful and thoughtful planning is required in the preparation of the budget for the next fiscal year with consideration given to following fiscal years. In addition, ensuring the availability of certain supplies will be paramount.

Budget for Fiscal Year 2021

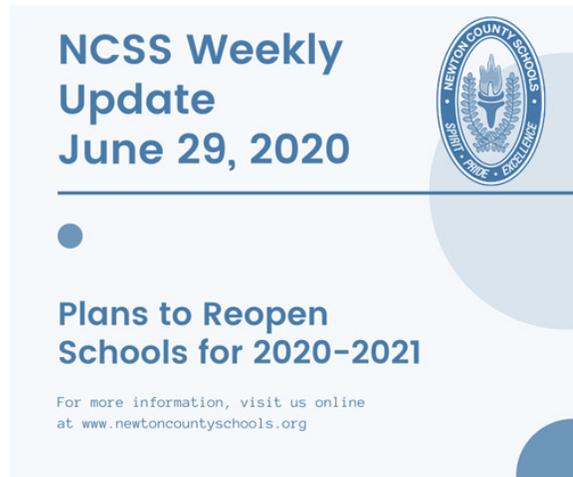
The school system’s budget for fiscal year 2021 (FY 2021) is being prepared. The local tax digest remains strong and ESPLOST collections are ahead of projections. However, there are two primary concerns related to the current budgeting process: a reduction in revenues and expenditures related to meeting the needs of students during this time as virtual learning options are made available, and additional safety and health precautions being required. The reduction in funding provided through the funding formula for education in Georgia is the first concern. The amount of the reduction was unknown until recently, necessitating the need for a delay in the approval of the NCSS budget. The school district will be able to offset the full impact of this reduction in state funding by using funds not expended during FY 2020 due to the closure of schools, utilizing funds provided through the CARES Act, reducing expenditures as compared to FY 2020, and by using the FY 2020 fund balance. Collectively, this fiscally responsible approach to diminishing the impact of reduced revenues will enable the school district to meet the challenges brought on by this global pandemic.

Supply Acquisition

The school system is working to procure and maintain an adequate supply of materials needed for normal school operations and any alternative scenarios deemed necessary. This includes the acquisition of items such as personal protective equipment (PPE) required in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nationwide, PPE shortages continue to pose a challenge to our regular suppliers. Manufacturers and vendors have prioritized their distribution to hospitals, health care workers and first responders. The school system currently holds contracts with numerous suppliers and is working with them to provide the necessary materials and supplies critical to school operations. These contracts will be utilized to the fullest extent possible to ensure that our supply needs are met. All contracts will be monitored and modified as needed to best meet the needs and interest of the school system. In addition to existing contracts, the school system will utilize alternative public and private sector suppliers to build and maintain our inventory, as required. As the supply chain recovers, we anticipate that the situation will improve. We will continue to identify and vet multiple sources of supply while planning for both short-term and long-term needs.

Communications

The school system is committed to honest, transparent, and consistent communications with our stakeholders. We understand that maintaining a two-way conversation with stakeholders is essential for building relationships. These relationships are the foundation for a strong school system. Providing frequent, clear communications is the key to fostering trust and increased loyalty to the district. As such, the school district's Public Relations (PR) Department has developed a Comprehensive Communications Plan to present a clear and concise framework for communicating with our community.



The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the need for an increased level of communications to our stakeholders, both internal and external. During this pandemic, the public relations department will utilize all communications options currently at its disposal to relay important, up-to-date information to stakeholders. These channels include the district website (www.newtoncountyschools.org), school webpages, *School Messenger* (phone and email messages), the weekly *Thursday Folder* newsletter, press releases, and social media accounts (*Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube*). As situations arise due to COVID-19 (school closures, changes in instructional delivery models, calendar changes, etc.) information will be posted and shared through the various communications channels so that all stakeholders are notified in a timely manner. In addition, information will be shared with the community's local media outlets—*The Covington News* and the *Newton Citizen*—and metro-Atlanta television and radio stations as needed.