



Planning for the next normal at school

Keeping students, staff, teachers, and families safe and healthy

Version 1.0

Updated 7/15/2020

Introduction and purpose

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare how much children and families depend on schools, not just as sites for quality education and supervision, but also as community anchors for social interaction, emotional support, nutritious meals, and health care.

Schools have consistently faced disproportionate resource allocation depending on how affluent their neighborhoods are, and these challenges have only been exacerbated by COVID-19 and the abrupt transition to a virtual setting. Compounded by the countless cases of racist police violence and a national cry for justice, school communities are facing unprecedented financial, emotional, and psychological turmoil. We have an opportunity and a responsibility to address these issues head-on as we support schools in preparing to reopen — to ensure that teachers can do their best teaching and students can do their best learning.

At Kaiser Permanente, we're committed to serving as a valuable partner in health to schools and districts making plans to reopen, either in person or through continued virtual learning. Curating the best thinking and guidance from national experts, we're dedicated to helping you meet the unique health needs of your schools and communities.

Considerations

To help ensure the best conditions for teaching and learning — both virtually and in person — health must be a top priority. The pandemic has made the link between health and learning even more apparent, especially among communities experiencing inequities. This means the role of schools as a hub of health is only growing as the needs of our students, staff, teachers, families, and communities change.

Now more than ever, it's important to consider the health of your school communities. Achieving your educational goals in today's educational environment is possible. To get there, you'll need to consider the following:

- **Addressing the effects of COVID-19** on the physical, mental, social, and economic well-being of your students, staff, teachers, and families.
- **Understanding the systemic and structural racism** embedded in many of this country's public institutions, including our schools. The current evolving movement for racial justice will also affect how children and families experience their return to school.
- **Being open to process and procedural changes** that can help you meet public health guidelines and address health concerns affecting teaching and learning.
- **Identifying and managing existing challenges** that might act as barriers to reopening, such as funding cuts, workforce shortages, and lack of school space.

How to use this playbook

This playbook is meant to offer useful tools for district and school leaders to support staff, teacher, and student health as schools reopen. Schools will need to rely on local public health data and guidance to determine when to reopen, but this playbook offers action items for how to do so — whether schools stay entirely virtual, return to in-person learning, or take a hybrid approach. Our guidance includes:

- A concise framework of the various health dimensions to consider while reopening schools virtually or in person
- Curated tools, resources, and recommendations on how to safely restart schools
- Ongoing updates to reflect the latest information and resources for school communities

While we reference other, complementary playbooks to support school reopening throughout this guide, there are two distinct characteristics that set the Planning for the Next Normal at School playbook apart:

- A specific focus on the dimensions of physical, mental, and social health — for students, staff, and teachers — that are critical for effective teaching and learning
- Expertise and endorsements from over 30 trusted school health organizations across the country

We will continue to evolve this content as guidance and circumstances change. For additional questions, please contact your Kaiser Permanente representative or [submit an inquiry online](#).

How Kaiser Permanente can support you

- **Industry assessments:** Review, locate, and leverage our curated collection of tools and assessments.
- **Webinars:** Watch the most up-to-date videos to inform your approach to staff and school considerations in the COVID-19 era.
- **Quality care and consultations:** Get care in person, online, and by phone, and consult on program and benefit design (for example, employee assistance programs, workers' compensation, disability/leave management) where appropriate.
- **Thinking beyond physical health:** Access our wide spectrum of clinical self-care tools and other resources to support staff and teacher mental and social well-being.

Other helpful resources:

Planning for the Next Normal at Work playbook: Health guidance and considerations for employers to help ensure a healthy, safe workplace as employees return to traditional work environments.

Contributing partners



Framework overview

Health dimensions for reopening your schools

COVID-19 and the stay-at-home orders have had significant impacts on physical, mental, and social health. Kaiser Permanente has developed this framework to help you think about and address the various health dimensions for students, staff, teachers, and families as you embark on the “next normal” at school.

In this playbook, you’ll find guidance for virtual and in-person learning environments, including:



Mental health and well-being

Understand how to assess and improve social-emotional health.



COVID-19 prevention

Make changes that help create a safe teaching and learning environment when school buildings reopen.



Social drivers of health

Manage nonmedical health needs and provide resources to address food security, economic opportunity, housing, transportation, and more.



Physical activity and physical education

Implement strategies to safely provide physical education and activities.



Staff and teacher well-being

Address health considerations specific to adults working in your schools.

This playbook prioritizes considerations of policy, equity, and family and community engagement, which can all contribute to a successful reopening strategy. Future versions of this playbook will also include funding considerations to help ensure all schools can fully take advantage of these resources.

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Chapter 1

The impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of students and educators

As schools strategize their reopening, students, staff, teachers, and families will need ways to process and respond to the impact of this pandemic.

Key takeaways:

- Understand the impact of COVID-19 on students and educators.
- Consider existing disparities and traumas.
- Develop a foundation of resilience.
- Utilize the 5 starter plays for enhancing mental health and well-being.



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Introduction and purpose

From the challenges of virtual learning to homelessness and food insecurities, the COVID-19 pandemic has had widespread repercussions on the health and livelihood of students, staff, teachers, and families. And as stay-at-home restrictions begin to lift, many education leaders are tasked with managing the evolving health concerns and regulations around reopening schools and school districts.

Mental health and well-being should be a top priority for school leaders to address as they rethink their educational environment. With the right preparation, a healthy, sustainable return to school is possible. And we're here to help.

This chapter of the Planning for the Next Normal at School playbook focuses on:

- Guidance on the mental health challenges your students might be facing
- Recommendations on how to address the mental health and well-being of school staff and students
- The 5 starter plays for enhancing mental health and well-being during reopening — a framework to help mitigate the spread of the coronavirus and support the mental health of your students and staff

We'll continue to update this content as guidance and circumstances change. For more information, please [contact us](#).

COVID-19's lingering impact on education

COVID-19 is having an unprecedented effect on students, staff, teachers, and families. While youths are not the [primary victims](#) of this virus, they may be significantly affected by its many mental health consequences. Children and youths are managing more stress at home, less social connection, and new ways of learning in a virtual environment. Additionally, the pandemic has both exacerbated existing health and education inequities and created [new ones](#), including reduced or inconsistent access to:

- Learning
- Healthy meals
- Safe environments and social opportunities
- Services for students in need of additional interventions and support

These growing inequities can have a lifelong impact on many students. As schools develop strategies to reopen, our students, families, and educators will need ways to process and respond to the impact of this pandemic.



Did you know?

Research shows that chronic exposure to stress impacts a person's ability to learn, develop relationships, and manage adversity.



Amplifying stressors on students and educators

Many students, staff, teachers, and family members will enter schools with mental and physical health issues resulting from stay-at-home orders. They'll also carry concerns about how to properly protect themselves against contracting COVID-19 at school.



Education leaders will be managing the ripple effects of COVID-19 on:

- School funding
- Workforce retention
- Academic progress



Students may be dealing with evolving family concerns like:

- Job loss and lack of social connection
- Food and housing insecurity
- Uncertainty about the future
- Navigating virtual learning

These challenges will place more pressure on an already stressed school system and potentially lead to negative outcomes for students.

Magnifying adverse childhood experiences

Over 60% of children in the United States face at least one [adverse childhood experience](#) (ACE) by age 18. Research shows that these experiences can disrupt student learning and behavior in the classroom, as well as put students at increased risk for mental and physical health conditions throughout their lifetimes.

While ACEs occur in the lives of youths from all backgrounds, many factors can intensify them, like:

- Racism
- [Structural drivers of inequity](#)
- Social health disparities



Did you know?

Repeatedly experiencing adversity can result in negative educational, physical, and mental health outcomes throughout a person's life and across generations.



Disconnecting from prior support systems

Disrupted support systems, feelings of isolation, and lack of safety all contribute to poor social-emotional health. Although every public health disaster carries the risk of increasing childhood trauma, COVID-19 will magnify traumatic experiences on a huge scale. The world now operates in a state of chronic uncertainty.

- Families are managing health risks and struggling to access necessities, such as food, housing, and employment.
- Extended stay-at-home orders find many families both physically distant from everyday support and cohabitating in often challenging physical and emotional environments.
- Students, staff, teachers, and families living in unstable environments are unable to seek previously relied-upon refuge at their schools.



Amplifying disparities within underrepresented communities

As with all adversities, COVID-19's effects are worsened by existing structural inequities, causing a disproportionate, compounding effect for many communities. These effects can negatively impact a person's social-emotional health and increase a sense of loss and anxiety among vulnerable populations and communities of color.



Black, Latino, and Native American communities are experiencing higher infection and mortality rates compared to white Americans. They may also be coping with other social stressors, like racial violence and civil unrest.



Asian American communities are facing stigma, xenophobia, and hate crimes.



Students with disabilities are dealing with a disruption in needed support and services, creating further academic disparities for these individuals.

Building a resilient foundation for reopening

Despite all the challenges presented by the pandemic, we know that schools are a bedrock of support for students, staff, teachers, and communities. Research has long demonstrated a strong link between a [student's social-emotional health and academic achievement](#).

- Youths who demonstrate positive social-emotional behaviors, such as self-management, responsible decision-making, and civic engagement, tend to [have greater success after graduation](#).
- [Students who feel connected](#) to their school are more likely to find academic success and less likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as drug use or violence.
- Schools and districts that focus on building a positive culture and climate see [improved attendance, student achievement, and teacher retention](#).



Prioritizing strategies and practices that support mental health and well-being

There are many strategies that can help support student resilience and cultivate a safe, supportive, and connected learning environment. Your faculty will play a key part in building this positive climate and culture.

The presence of a single caring adult in a young person's life can have a [profound influence](#) on their physical, social, and mental health. As the front-line representatives of your school, staff and teachers will soon be presented with a unique opportunity to help their students take on new challenges. However, it's also important to recognize that your faculty members might need additional support and training to properly address the changing needs of their students.



The 5 starter plays for enhancing mental health and well-being during reopening

Use these 5 starter plays to lay the groundwork for a mentally healthy culture and help your school community rebuild with even greater strength, compassion, and resilience. The plays are useful in both physical and virtual learning environments.



1. Community-building activities

Reestablish connections with regular and consistent community-building activities throughout the day.



2. Trauma-informed training

Prioritize continuous professional learning on implementing trauma-informed practices.



3. Open discussions on environmental stressors

Encourage students, staff, teachers, and families to talk about stressors that might cause emotional distress and exacerbate existing trauma reactions.



4. Social-emotional skill building

Provide instruction in social-emotional skill building, with an emphasis on strategies to identify and manage stress.



5. Mental health support services

Develop a clear and consistent process for identifying and supporting individuals in need of additional mental health intervention and support.

See the resources section at the end of this document for additional strategies to strengthen and expand your approach.



1. Community-building activities

Reestablish connections with regular and consistent community-building activities throughout the day.

- Conduct daily morning meetings.
- [Find time for check-ins with staff and students.](#)
- Identify opportunities for peer learning (for example, lessons designed to provide ways for students to learn and work together).
- Establish organizational structures that promote staff wellness (for example, providing opportunities to connect with other staff, integrating wellness activities into staff meetings).
- [See more.](#)

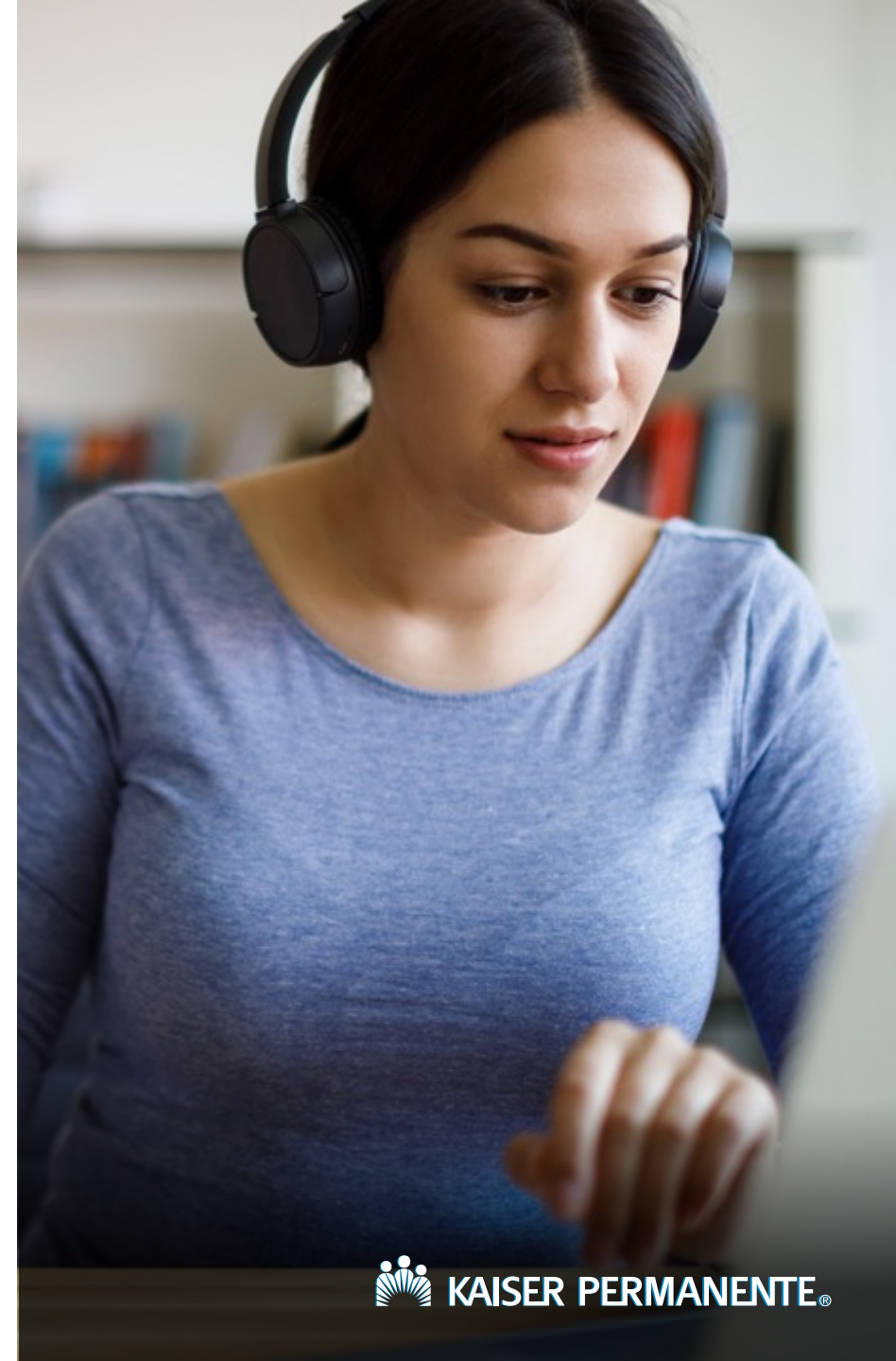




2. Trauma-informed training

Prioritize continuous professional learning on implementing trauma-informed practices.

- [Provide all staff professional learning opportunities.](#)
- Review and revise school [policies and procedures](#) to be more trauma-informed and adapted to a virtual context.
- Create opportunities for staff and teachers to observe each other and provide feedback.
- [See more.](#)





3. Open discussions on environmental stressors

Encourage students, staff, and teachers to talk about environmental stressors (for example, masks, illness, physical distancing, and hybrid learning) that might cause emotional distress and exacerbate existing trauma reactions.

- Build in time to practice new routines — teaching handwashing, no-touch practices, virtual high-fives, etc.
- Build in time during the day to allow students to express and process emotions.
- [See more.](#)

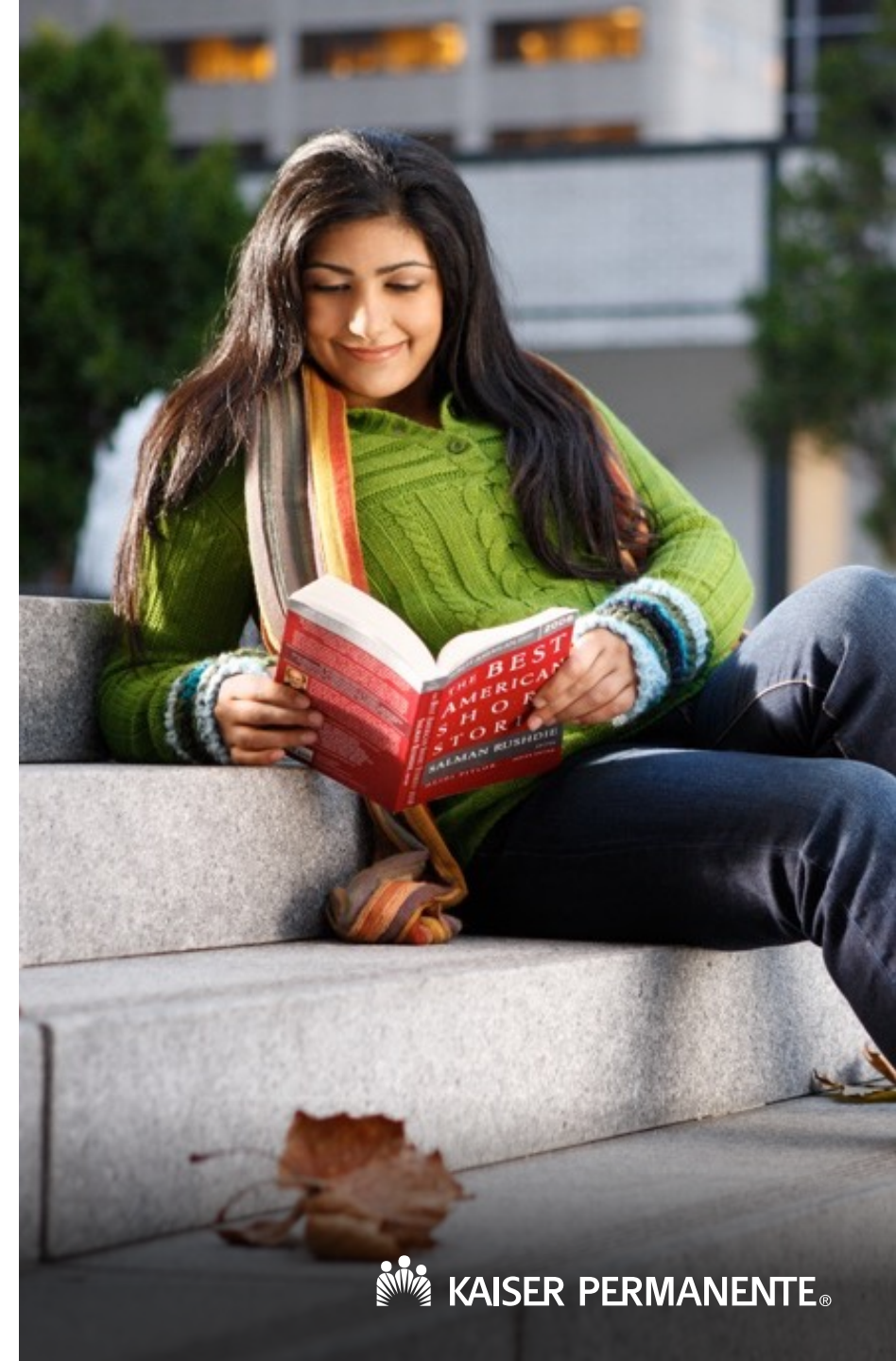




4. Social-emotional skill building

Provide instruction on social-emotional skill building with an emphasis on strategies to identify and manage stress.

- Build in [time during the day](#) for students to share their experiences.
- Introduce and model coping strategies that students can apply to those experiences.
- Integrate [practices that promote social-emotional skills](#) into the school day (for example, collectively practicing a “mindful minute” as a transition between activities).
- Provide a [calming space or set of strategies](#) for students to de-stress, and encourage daily norms that allow them to use these resources when needed.
- [See more.](#)





5. Mental health support services

Develop a clear and consistent process for identifying and supporting individuals in need of additional mental health intervention and support.

- Create a process to identify students who are struggling with internalizing or externalizing behaviors.
- Ensure that staff and teachers understand how to refer students for additional resources and support.
- Create easy pathways for students to access mental health resources (for example, regular classroom visits by mental health staff, encouraged check-ins, or passes for accessing counseling).
- Create a process for families and school staff to collaborate on student support plans and share available resources.
- [See more.](#)



Checklist: 5 starter plays for enhancing mental health and well-being during reopening

Print this page to help track your progress toward completing the 5 starter steps.



1. Community-building activities

- ☐ Conduct daily morning meetings.
- ☐ Find time for staff and student check-ins.
- ☐ Identify opportunities for peer learning (for example, lessons designed to provide ways for students to learn and work together).



2. Trauma-informed training

- ☐ Provide staff and teachers with professional learning opportunities.
- ☐ Review and revise school policies and procedures to be more trauma-informed and adapted to a virtual context.
- ☐ Create opportunities for staff to observe each other and provide feedback.



3. Open discussions on environmental stressors

- ☐ Build in time to practice new routines (for example, teaching handwashing, no-touch practices, and virtual high-fives).
- ☐ Build in time during the day to allow students to express and process emotions.



4. Social-emotional skill building

- ☐ Build in time during the day for students to share their experiences.
- ☐ Introduce coping strategies that students can apply to those experiences.
- ☐ Integrate practices that promote social-emotional skills (for example, “mindful minutes” in between activities).
- ☐ Provide a calming space or set of strategies for students to de-stress.



5. Mental health support services

- ☐ Create a process to identify students who are struggling with mental health.
- ☐ Ensure all staff understand how to refer students for additional resources and support.
- ☐ Create easy pathways for accessing mental health resources (for example, regular classroom visits by mental health staff or passes to access counseling).
- ☐ Create a process for families and school staff to collaborate on and share student support plans and resources.

Additional district and school administrator resources

The resources below can help schools and districts strengthen and expand their approach to supporting mental health and well-being.

- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
 - [SEL in Homes and Communities](#)
 - [Schools, Families, and Social and Emotional Learning: Ideas and Tools for Working With Parents and Families](#)
- National Conference of State Legislators
 - [Boosting Social and Emotional Development in and out of School](#)
- ChangeLab Solutions
 - [Blueprint for Changemakers – Achieving Health Equity Through Law & Policy](#)
- National Center for School Mental Health
 - [Advancing Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems: Guidance From the Field](#)
 - [School mental health COVID-19 resources](#)
- National Association of School Psychologists
 - [COVID-19: Family & Educator Resources](#)
- UCSF HEARTS: Healthy Environment and Response to Trauma in Schools
 - [COVID-19 Resources](#)
- National Association of School Nurses
 - [COVID-19 Resources for School Nurses](#)
- Kaiser Permanente
 - [Resilience in School Environments: Understanding and Practice \(RISE UP\) virtual workshop for teachers, staff, and administrators](#)

Chapter 2

Enhancing a prevention strategy during COVID-19

As schools begin to reopen, developing a COVID-19 prevention strategy is essential to keeping your students, staff, teachers, and families healthy and safe.

Key takeaways:

- Identify deficiencies and inequities.
- Build on existing CDC best practices.
- Augment your prevention strategy.
- Utilize the 5 starter plays for building district and school capacity to implement a successful COVID-19 prevention strategy.



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Introduction and purpose

Districts and schools, as well as the staff, teachers, and students who attend them, are on the front line of the pandemic, and will play a critical role in COVID-19 prevention. By involving them in your strategies and considerations for developing your prevention plan, you'll help promote better health across your school environments.

This playbook is intended to serve as a companion guide that builds upon, and doesn't duplicate, the clinical recommendations offered by the CDC and other departments of public health for when and whether to reopen schools.

This chapter of the Planning for the Next Normal at School playbook focuses on:

- Insights on the social and economic challenges brought about by COVID-19
- Recommendations on how to enhance a COVID-19 prevention strategy
- The 5 starter plays for enhancing your COVID-19 prevention strategy — a framework to help mitigate the spread of the coronavirus

We'll continue to update this content as guidance and circumstances change.
For more information, please [contact us](#).

Identifying deficiencies and inequities

Developing a COVID-19 prevention strategy is critical to stopping the spread of the virus and ensuring schools can remain safe and open. However, district and school leaders have varying levels of access to the infrastructure, training, and resources needed to address the challenges ahead.

Schools are also contending with social and economic inequities brought about by COVID-19 in many underrepresented communities.

- **Black, Latino, and Native American** communities are experiencing [higher infection and mortality rates](#) compared to white Americans. They may also be coping with other social stressors, like cases of racist police violence and civil unrest.
- **Asian American** communities are facing [stigma, xenophobia, and hate crimes](#).



Accessing existing prevention measures

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other national experts are building recommendations to support schools reopening. These recommendations address key clinical components of COVID-19 prevention, such as testing and checking for symptoms.

We must promote adoption of evidence-based strategies and ensure the partnerships and resources are in place to help schools safely reopen and remain open.



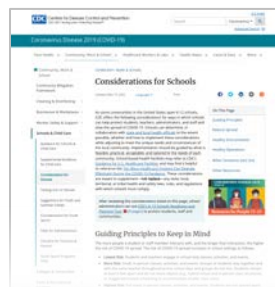
Utilizing CDC resources

CDC recommendations address key components of a successful COVID-19 prevention strategy, including how to ensure school facilities and operations promote best practices and how to create a school environment that promotes student and staff physical health.



[CDC Activities and Initiatives Supporting the COVID-19 Response and the President's Plan for Opening America Up Again](#) (see page 46):

A summary of CDC initiatives, activities, and tools in support of the government's response to COVID-19.



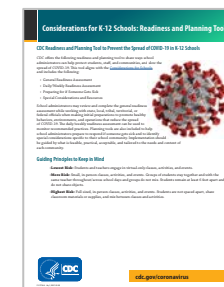
[Considerations for Schools:](#)

Recommendations to help keep communities safe as K-12 schools and summer day camps gradually scale up activities.



[Schools Reopening Decision Tree:](#)

A support tool to help K-12 administrators make reopening decisions during COVID-19.



[Considerations for K-12 Schools: CDC Readiness and Planning \(RAP\) Tool:](#)

A tool that shares ways school administrators can help protect students, staff, and communities, and slow the spread of COVID-19.

Enhancing your prevention strategy by building on CDC best practices

We know that every school is different. To help ensure your school districts and schools have the capacity to implement the CDC's best practices, you may need to build on and adjust their recommendations. And by utilizing staff trainings, union collaboration, and family engagement protocols, you'll be able to strengthen your prevention plans even further.



Staff trainings

Staff and teachers must feel that they're equipped with the skills and training they need to be on the front line of this response. Schools should also strive to achieve psychological safety for their staff and teachers. For recommendations on supporting the mental health of your students, staff, and teachers, see [Chapter 1](#) and [Chapter 5](#) of this playbook.



Labor union collaboration

Working with labor unions can help address the needs of your staff and teachers and establish an agreed upon communications strategy to support employee health.



Family engagement

Regular communication and engagement with families will help ensure schools can reopen and stay open. Effective strategies should engage non-English-speaking families, as well as families of students with disabilities.

The 5 starter plays for enhancing your COVID-19 prevention strategy

Use these 5 starter plays to build on CDC recommendations and implement an enhanced prevention strategy that's continually supported by students, staff, teachers, and families. The plays are useful in both in-person and virtual learning environments.



1. Provide staff and teachers with training opportunities to support COVID-19 prevention within the school building.



2. Take advantage of your staff's expertise in health and wellness to develop your prevention strategy.



3. Engage students' families to help develop and implement your prevention strategy.



4. Work with community partners and agencies to develop and implement your prevention strategy.



5. Destigmatize COVID-19 to support emotional, mental, and physical health in families and communities.



1. Provide staff and teachers with training opportunities

- Train staff and teachers on changes in policies and procedures.
- Educate staff about COVID-19 transmission, symptoms, and their effects on local communities. This includes:
 - Teachers
 - Administrators
 - Facility managers
 - Paraprofessionals, such as bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria workers, and secretaries
- Train staff and teachers on [how to communicate with students](#) in age-appropriate ways about the school's new policies and programs.
- Train staff and teachers on [how to establish appropriate physical space](#) in classroom and hallways.
- Use school data on attendance, student engagement, student health records, and public health data to identify students who might need additional support. Data should help staff and teachers meet their students' needs through remote and in-person learning.
- Speak with school staff about employee sanitation (for example, physical distancing, handwashing, respiratory etiquette, and personal protective equipment) and keep them regularly informed on school decisions in response to COVID-19. Communicate with the languages and methods (for example, announcements, emails, posters, and texting) your workforce uses, and leverage bilingual government resources (Occupational Safety and Health Administration, CDC, etc.).
- Establish a structure and process for raising questions or concerns and sharing feedback about COVID-19 policy and process changes. Staff and teachers will have a role in implementing an effective COVID-19 prevention strategy, which makes ongoing feedback critical to its success.



2. Take advantage of your staff's expertise in health and wellness

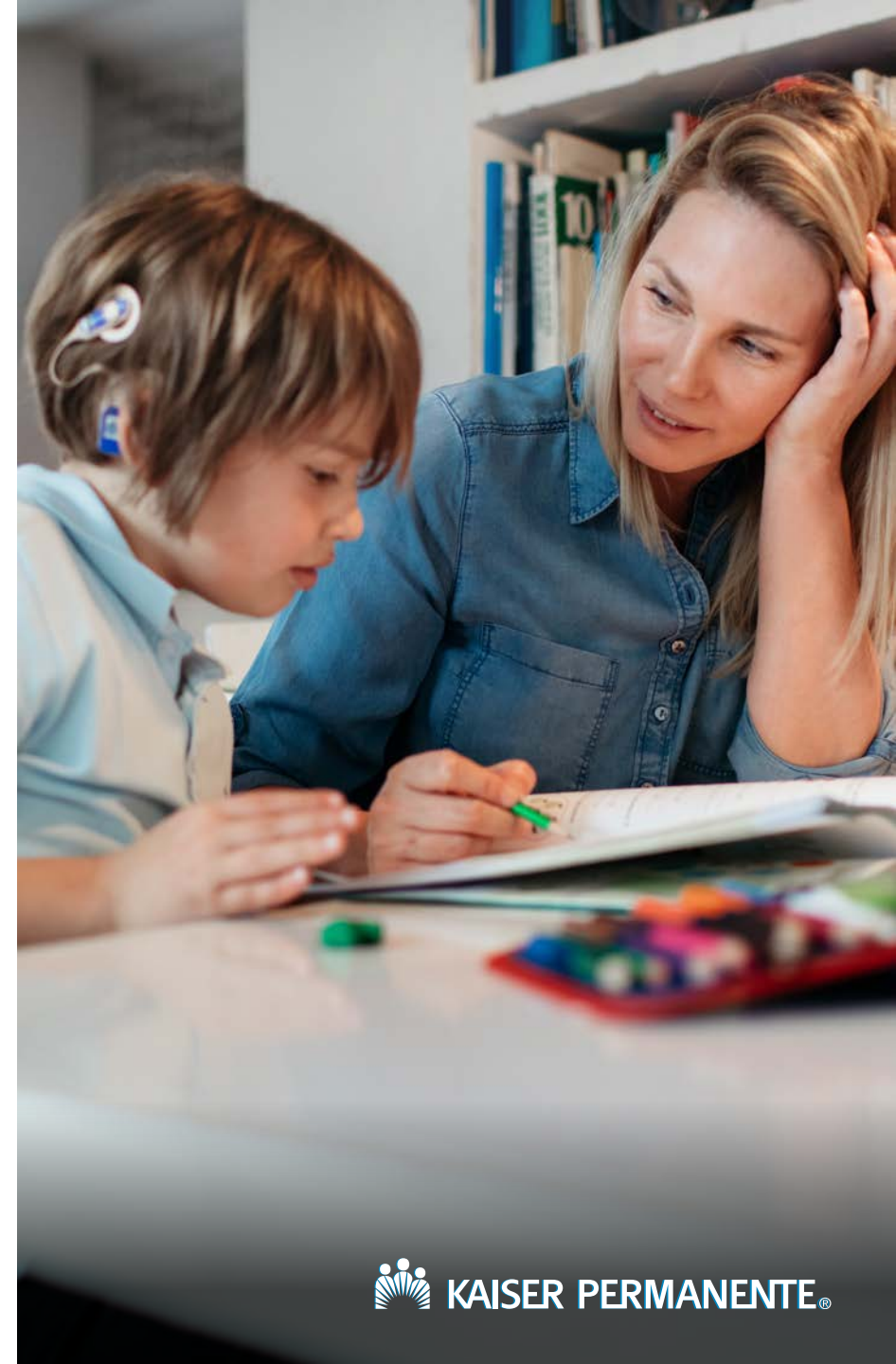
- Plan and implement COVID-19 prevention strategies in partnership with school staff with expertise in health and wellness, such as nurses and other [specialized instructional support personnel \(SISP\)](#), health and physical education teachers, and custodial staff.
- Ensure school staff, especially school nurses and other SISP, are involved with developing plans for your school's reopening and receive training and materials (including personal protective equipment) to meet student and staff health needs.
- Work with staff and teachers to develop and implement plans for supporting populations at high risk for COVID-19. Your plans should consider staff who support students with disabilities (where closer physical contact may be required) and students who need to see the faces of their peers and educators.





3. Engage students' families to help develop and implement your prevention strategy

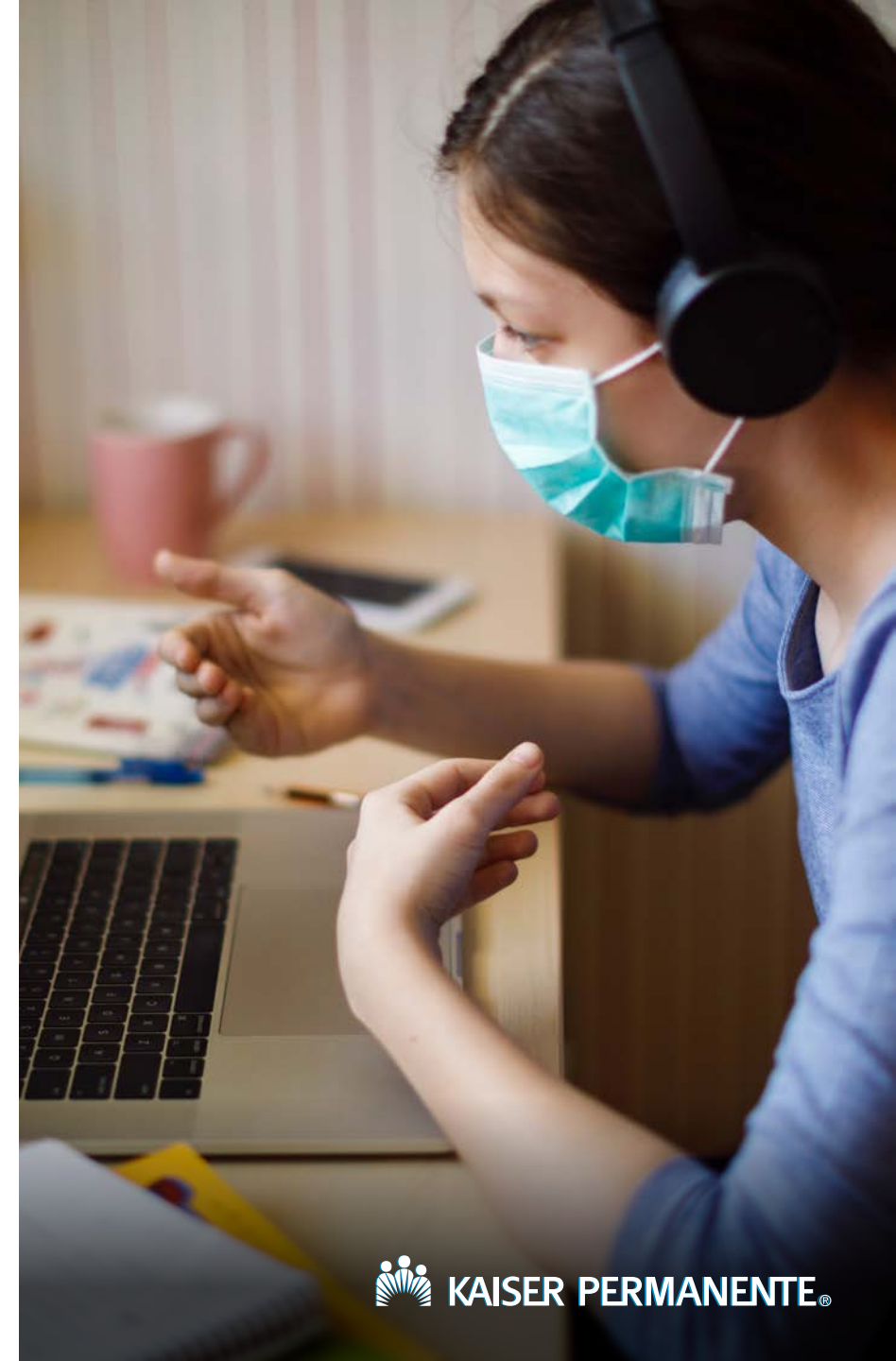
- Invite families to planning meetings for your school's reopening.
- Inform families about when to send their children to school, safety protocols (for example, student mask policies and visitor limits in school buildings), and what the school is doing to help keep their children safe at school. You should also provide guidance on who to contact with questions or concerns about school reopening and how (for example, texts, emails, and phone calls).
- Communicate what's required for students to return to school (for example, annual well-child visits, immunizations, screenings, and testing) and school district plans for switching between virtual and in-person learning depending on school and public health data.
- Share [key resources](#) and [guidance](#) families can use to speak with their children about COVID-19.
- Inform families about programs and services that are and aren't available at school. It's critical for your communication to be inclusive of all communities.
- Conduct parent and family surveys, focus groups, or virtual town hall meetings to collect feedback on your prevention strategy and evaluate success.





4. Work with community partners and agencies to develop and implement your prevention strategy

- Designate a point of contact on the school staff to liaison with local public health agencies and track evolving conversations. This will help ensure up-to-date COVID-19 information is available and shared with staff, teachers, and families. Use public health data to inform decision making about reopening and closing schools.
- Work with local public health agencies, health care providers, and community-based organizations to provide resources and support, such as personal protective equipment, training for school staff, and communications materials.
- Engage with local and state decision-making authorities (for example, your school board, state education agency, and state board of education) to share successes and challenges that can inform future policy making and guidance development.
- Partner with culturally specific organizations to develop outreach materials and engagement opportunities for families and communities.





5. Destigmatize COVID-19

- Uphold your [students' civil rights](#) by preventing all forms of bullying, harassment, and racist intimidation or behavior.
- As schools increasingly become sites of medical care and coordination, recognize the unintended effects this could have on families' trust of schools and resulting student behaviors, such as school avoidance and absenteeism. Rather than punishing noncompliance with new policies, implement [truancy and absenteeism strategies](#) to ensure students and families feel supported and engaged in the school community.
- Identify and implement strategies that recognize the different lived experiences of families and how COVID-19 has affected their lives. For example, some [families live in fear of deportation](#) or have pandemic experiences that have introduced new behavioral and physical health challenges.



Checklist: 5 starter plays for enhancing your COVID-19 prevention strategy

Print this page to help track your progress toward completing the 5 starter steps.



1. Provide staff and teachers with training opportunities

- ☐ Train staff on policies and procedures.
- ☐ Educate staff about COVID-19 transmission, symptoms, and effects on local communities.
- ☐ Train staff and teachers on how to discuss new policies and programs.
- ☐ Train staff and teachers on how to establish physical space in classrooms and hallways.
- ☐ Use data on attendance, student engagement, student health records, and public health data to identify student support opportunities.
- ☐ Speak with school staff about employee sanitation, like physical distancing and respiratory etiquette.
- ☐ Establish a process for raising questions and sharing feedback about COVID-19 policy changes.



2. Take advantage of your staff's expertise in health and wellness

- ☐ Plan and implement COVID-19 prevention strategies in partnership with school staff, such as nurses and other specialized instructional support personnel (SISP), health and physical education teachers, and custodial staff.
- ☐ Ensure staff and teachers are trained to help develop your reopening plan.
- ☐ Develop plans for supporting populations at high risk for COVID-19.



3. Engage students' families to help develop and implement your prevention strategy

- ☐ Invite families to planning meetings.
- ☐ Inform families about when to send their children to school, safety protocols, and who to contact with questions or concerns.
- ☐ Communicate what's required for students to return to school, like well-child visits, immunizations, screenings, and testing.
- ☐ Share resources to help families speak with their children about COVID-19.
- ☐ Inform families about school programs and services that are and aren't available.
- ☐ Conduct surveys, focus groups, or virtual town halls to collect ongoing feedback.



4. Work with community partners and agencies to develop and implement your prevention strategy

- ☐ Designate a point of contact on the school staff to liaison with local public health agencies and ensure up-to-date COVID-19 information is available to share.
- ☐ Work with local public health agencies, health care providers, and community-based organizations to provide resources and support.
- ☐ Engage with local and state decision-making authorities to share successes and challenges that can inform future policymaking.
- ☐ Partner with culturally specific organizations to develop outreach materials for families.



5. Destigmatize COVID-19

- ☐ Uphold your students' civil rights by preventing bullying, harassment, and racist behavior.
- ☐ Implement truancy and absenteeism strategies to ensure students and families feel supported and engaged in the school community.
- ☐ Implement strategies that recognize the different lived experiences of families and how COVID-19 has affected their lives.

Additional district and school administrator resources

- [Reopening Schools in the Context of COVID-19: Health and Safety Guidelines From Other Countries](#) (Learning Policy Institute): Health, safety, and physical distancing strategies used to successfully reopen schools in other countries.
- [Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19](#) (World Health Organization): Considerations for decision-makers and educators on how and when to reopen or close schools.
- [COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Reentry](#) (American Academy of Pediatrics): Guidance on reopening schools after COVID-19, including considerations for instructional time, physical and mental health, special populations, and more.
- [A Plan to Safely Reopen America's Schools and Communities](#) (American Federation of Teachers): A roadmap of next steps on reopening America's schools and communities, including guidance on transitioning from lockdowns and public health tools to limit the spread of COVID-19.
- [Return to School Roadmap](#) (Opportunity Labs): A roadmap of essential actions to help plan and implement a safe, efficient, and equitable return to school, including 3 key phases (do first, do before schools open, and do when schools are open).
- [Corona Virus Disease 2019 Resources](#) (National Association of School Nurses): A variety of valuable resources from the CDC and other groups for school nurses.
- [COVID-19 Resources](#) (School-Based Health Alliance): A curated list of COVID-19 resources.
- [All Hands on Deck: Initial Guidance on Reopening School Buildings](#) (National Education Association): Recommendations on reopening buildings and ensuring student and educator success.
- [Decision Points for COVID Comeback Models](#) (Education Resource Strategies): A series of "COVID Comeback School Models" that offer sample student groupings, schedules, staff roles, and systemwide implications.

Chapter 3

COVID-19's effect on the social drivers of health

Understanding the social drivers that impact the health of your students, staff, teachers, and families will play a crucial role in your reopening strategy.

Key takeaways:

- Identify the social drivers of health.
- Understand the role of racism on social drivers.
- Establish a network of support and resources.
- Utilize the 5 starter plays for affecting the social drivers of health.



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Introduction and purpose

Every school has unique social drivers of health, so we encourage you to engage and work with your students, staff, teachers, and families to help prioritize what's best for your community. Coordinating a holistic approach to understand and address your local social drivers of health will help ensure the healthiest and most equitable outcomes — and help your school community rebuild with even greater strength, resilience, and unity.

This chapter of the Planning for the Next Normal at School playbook focuses on:

- Identifying and understanding the social drivers of health in your school community
- Cultivating a network of support so your students, staff, teachers, and families can connect to vital resources
- The 5 starter plays for affecting the social drivers of health during reopening — a framework to help support your community's unique needs

We'll continue to update this content as guidance and circumstances change. For more information, please [contact us](#).

Social drivers of health are the conditions in which people are:

- Born
- Grow
- Live
- Work
- Age

Identifying the social drivers of health

The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced how difficult it is for many community members to get what they need to be healthy. Most of the factors that support health exist outside the doctor's office, like:



Housing



Food security






Economic opportunities

Understanding the impact of racism on social drivers

Racism is [built into our society's infrastructure](#), including the educational system. This often manifests in the academic achievement gap and harsher disciplinary actions for students of color that contribute to the school-prison pipeline. Left unaddressed, these social issues can become barriers for students to learn, grow, and thrive — so we must address them head-on in our community institutions.

[Structural racism directly impacts social drivers of health](#) and creates inequities within communities of color. In turn, these communities are disproportionately excluded from access to adequate health care, safe and environmentally clean living conditions, fresh and healthy food, and more. Although COVID-19 has affected many communities and industries, it has [disproportionately impacted communities of color](#), further exacerbating preexisting health, racial, and economic inequities that can impact a person's overall health, including:

 Living conditions	 Social and economic factors	 Health and access issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Living in densely populated areas• Residing farther from grocery stores and medical facilities• Living in multigenerational homes• Experiencing racial residential segregation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facing stigma and systemic racism• Worrying about paying monthly bills• Working in industries that are more vulnerable to job loss during COVID-19 (leisure, hospitality, retail, etc.)• Having little or no paid sick leave• Working in high-contact, lower-paying positions (nursing assistants, cooks, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delaying care due to cost, inability to take time off, distrust of the health care system, etc.• Having underlying medical conditions (asthma, diabetes, etc.)• Having fair or poor health• Being uninsured

Connecting students to vital resources

Everyone has been affected by COVID-19 mentally, physically, and economically. Some children and families are facing these issues for the first time while others are experiencing even more housing, food, and economic insecurity than before. However, these issues can be addressed and mitigated to ensure everyone can live a healthier and more equitable life.

School systems can serve as a safe and trusted partner to connect students, staff, teachers, and families to resources to ensure they have:



Enough food to eat



Safe places to live



**Solutions to address
their other needs**

Establishing a network of support

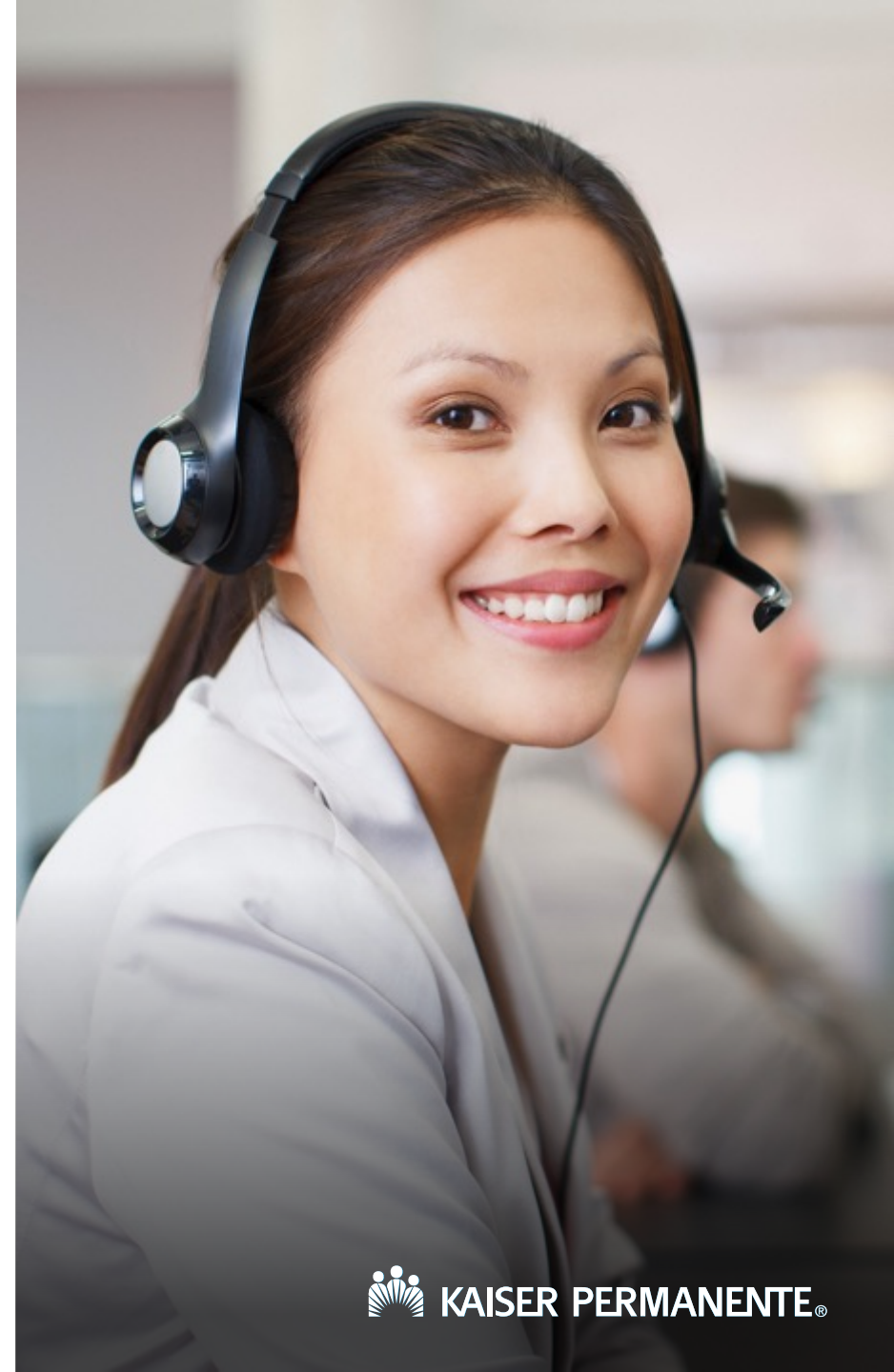
Whether in person or virtually, schools are critical places to address the learning and teaching barriers caused by food insecurity, housing instability, and other social drivers of health. As centers of learning and touchpoints for social support services, they're also the ideal place to support students and families in identifying their priorities and needs. To assist in your efforts, leverage things like:

- School policies and programs
- Local health and human services agencies
- Partnerships with community-based organizations, housing agencies, and health care providers



Did you know?

Healthy students are more successful learners — and successful learners, in turn, are more likely to have lifelong health.



The 5 starter plays for affecting the social drivers of health during reopening

Use these 5 starter plays to lay the groundwork for supportive school spaces for students, staff, teachers, and families. These plays are useful in both in-person and virtual learning environments.



1. Begin to address the impact of institutional racism on education and health



2. Connect your community to resources for food security



3. Work with local health and human services to support families enrolling in Medicaid or CHIP



4. Connect families or staff experiencing homelessness to unstable-housing resources



5. Connect families and staff to programs and organizations that support financial security

To reduce stigma, we recommend promoting universal education outreach as opposed to targeting students or families who may be most affected by the social drivers of health. One approach is to offer education and application events in coordination with other important school activities. Another inclusive practice is to add links and information in school and districtwide newsletters.



1. Begin to address the impact of institutional racism on education and health

Develop an understanding about the impact of institutional and interpersonal racism on educational opportunity and health. Commit to counteracting these adverse effects.

- Seek out partners in equity, diversity, and inclusion to provide resources and training for all school staff, like:
 - [Racial Equity Tools](#)
 - [EmbraceRace](#)
 - [NCSMH Cultural Responsiveness and Equity](#)
 - [Addressing Race and Trauma in the Classroom](#)
 - [Teaching Tolerance](#)
- Build authentic relationships with formal and informal leaders of color from your community. Actively engage them in planning for reopening and consider their potential roles in connecting with and engaging families.





2. Connect your community to resources for food security

Identify the unique needs of your community to help them access the right food and nutrition resources.

- Widely distribute food access information to help families connect to resources like:
 - [Feeding America: Find Your Local Food Bank](#)
 - [USDA: National Hunger Hotline](#)
 - [USDA: Find Meals for Kids When Schools Are Closed](#)
- Consider working directly with a local food pantry to offer or expand in-house resources.
- Ensure that all staff are prepared with information to share during in-person or virtual home visits if families express a need.
- Help ensure that eligible families receive [Pandemic EBT](#).
- Work with local health and human services to support applications for the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#) and [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\)](#).
- Coordinate applications for free or reduced meals or universal meal programs.
- [Find meals for kids when schools are closed](#).
- Identify resources for families who may be ineligible for federal assistance due to immigration status or other factors.



3. Work with local health and human services to support families enrolling in Medicaid or CHIP

Many families could use help accessing the services and benefits they're entitled to receive.

- Educate families about who qualifies for Medicaid's free or low-cost medical benefits: eligible adults with a low income, children, pregnant women, people who are age 65 or over, and people with disabilities.
- Inform families that if income is too high for Medicaid, a child may still qualify for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). It covers medical and dental care for uninsured children and teens up to age 19.





4. Connect families or staff experiencing homelessness to unstable-housing resources

- Identify local opportunities for students and families experiencing homelessness and housing instability:
 - [Your local HUD office](#)
 - [The local public Housing Authority](#)
 - [The affordable housing locator](#)
- Point students and families to community housing aid:
 - The National Low Income Housing Coalition has a [searchable database and map](#) of multifamily properties that are covered under federal moratoriums on evictions.
 - [Legal Resources and Housing Assistance](#): Local organizations in each state offer support with legal services, housing and utility assistance, tenant rights, and education and advocacy.
 - [Community Action Agencies](#): Local Community Action Agencies may help with housing costs and other social needs support.
- Create opportunities for your [McKinney-Vento](#) liaison to educate parents, staff, and students.



\$ 5. Connect families and staff to programs and organizations that support financial security

- Encourage families to [take this survey](#) to find government benefits they may be eligible to receive.
- Partner with job development programs, skills training, and employment programs, such as the U.S. [Department of Labor](#) and [Goodwill Industries](#).
- Co-host interview skill building, ESOL classes, or other workshops to support families and staff in achieving living-wage employment.



Checklist: The 5 starter plays for affecting the social drivers of health during reopening

Print this page to help track your progress toward completing the 5 starter plays.



1. Begin to address the impact of institutional racism on education and health

- ☐ Seek out partners in equity, diversity, and inclusion to provide resources and training for all school staff.
- ☐ Build authentic relationships with formal and informal leaders of color from your community.



2. Connect your community to resources for food security

- ☐ Widely distribute food access information to families.
- ☐ Consider working directly with a local food pantry.
- ☐ Ensure that all staff are prepared for home visits.
- ☐ Help ensure that eligible families receive Pandemic EBT.
- ☐ Work with local health and human services to support applications for SNAP and WIC.
- ☐ Coordinate applications for free or reduced meals or universal meal programs.
- ☐ Find meals for kids when schools are closed.
- ☐ Identify resources for families who may be ineligible for federal assistance due to immigration status or other factors.



3. Work with local health and human services to support families enrolling in Medicaid or CHIP

- ☐ Educate families about who qualifies for Medicaid's free or low-cost medical benefits: eligible adults with a low income, children, pregnant women, people who are age 65 or over, and people with disabilities.
- ☐ Inform families that if income is too high for Medicaid, a child may still qualify for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). It covers medical and dental care for uninsured children and teens up to age 19.



4. Connect families or staff experiencing homelessness to unstable-housing resources

- ☐ Identify local opportunities for students and families experiencing homelessness and housing instability, like your local HUD office, the local public Housing Authority, or an affordable housing locator.
- ☐ Point students and families to community housing aid, like the National Low Income Housing Coalition, legal resources and housing assistance, and community action agencies.
- ☐ Create opportunities for your McKinney-Vento liaison to educate parents, staff, and students.



5. Connect families and staff to programs and organizations that support financial security

- ☐ Encourage families to [take the benefits.gov survey](https://www.benefits.gov/survey) to find government benefits they may be eligible to receive.
- ☐ Work with job development programs, skills training, and employment programs, such as the U.S. Department of Labor and Goodwill Industries.
- ☐ Co-host interview skill building, ESOL classes, or other workshops to support families and staff in achieving living-wage employment.

Additional district and school administrator resources

- [Advancing Health Equity: Addressing the Role of Structural Racism](#)
- [McKinney-Vento Act](#)
- [Blueprint for Changemakers: Achieving health equity through law & policy](#)
- [Community Eligibility Provision](#)

Chapter 4

The importance of physical activity and physical education during COVID-19

As schools begin to reopen, continuing physical activity and physical education will be essential in providing a well-rounded program.

Key takeaways:

- Understand the impact of COVID-19 on physical education.
- Address existing disparities and inequities.
- Incorporate social and emotional learning.
- Define physical education and physical activity.
- Utilize the 5 starter plays for implementing physical activity and physical education during both in-person and virtual reopening.



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Introduction and purpose

While educational environments continue to change, physical activity and physical education remain vital components to a well-rounded education and a student's whole health. As many parks and community recreation areas remain closed, education leaders are tasked with managing both new and existing physical activity and physical education concerns across in-person and virtual teaching environments.

Physical activity and physical education should continue to hold a place in any new models of learning that school leaders build as they rethink their educational environment. With the right context and guidance, school staff and teachers can provide students with the physical education they need to thrive in our next normal.

This chapter of the Planning for the Next Normal at School playbook focuses on:

- Guidance on the physical activity and physical education challenges your students might be facing
- Recommendations on how to address the physical activity and physical education of students, staff, and teachers
- The [5 starter plays for implementing physical activity and physical education during reopening](#) — a framework to help mitigate the challenges COVID-19 presents for physical health and social and emotional learning

We'll continue to update this content as guidance and circumstances change.
For more information, please [contact us](#).

Understanding COVID-19's impact on physical activity and physical education

Schools play a vital role in ensuring children and adolescents get the [nationally recommended](#) 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Yet, COVID-19 has:

- **Reduced access:** Student access to physical education and physical activity have been greatly limited due to school, park, and playground closures as well as government shelter-in-place orders.
- **Compounded existing challenges:** Low-income students, students with disabilities, and students of color historically lack access to safe places to play, physical activity equipment, and physical education instruction delivered by certified physical educators.



Addressing existing challenges, disparities, and inequities

The pandemic has only increased the equity gap in education and highlighted disparities like:



Access: Children may have limited and varying access to physical activity, physical activity equipment, digital devices, the internet, learning materials, and specialized instruction.



Environment: Children living in high-crime neighborhoods are generally less able to meet physical activity recommendations than those living in low-crime neighborhoods due to lack of access to safe places to play.



Ability: [Children with disabilities](#) may only have access to modified physical activity equipment at their school and not in their homes or neighborhood.

By proactively communicating and engaging with students and their families and prioritizing physical education instruction and opportunities for physical activity for all students, schools can help mitigate these physical activity equity gaps.



Did you know?

According to the [CDC's 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#), only 26% of high school students participated in at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day during the week, and only 30% attended physical education class daily while in school.

Reinforcing the importance of physical activity and physical education

As students lose academic instruction time due to school closures, school leaders will be considering ways to increase access to academic content, which may reduce or eliminate content related to physical education or time spent participating in physical activity.

Whether they're offering in-person or virtual student instruction, schools need to strongly commit to offering physical education and physical activity during COVID-19. It's a necessary part of a well-rounded education that will best support the whole child.



Highlighting the critical need for physical activity and physical education

As schools prepare to create new models for learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic, supporting students' physical, [mental, social, and emotional health](#) is paramount. Physical education teachers are trained and equipped to teach students how to develop the ability, confidence, and desire to be physically active for life. [Physical activity](#) has been shown to:

- Decrease stress and anxiety
- Increase focus and concentration
- Improve self-esteem, academic performance, and fitness levels
- Prevent injury and disease



Defining physical education

Physical education programs offer the best opportunity to provide physical activity to all children and to teach them the skills and knowledge needed to establish and sustain an active lifestyle.

Despite other necessary changes amid COVID-19, state and school district wellness policies that require physical education instruction should be implemented with fidelity, during both in-person instruction and virtual learning. For this reason, certified physical educators are essential, because they're trained in standards-based, grade-level outcomes that focus more on individual pursuits rather than team activities where physical contact between students could occur.

Physical education provides K-12 students with a planned, sequential, standards-based curriculum designed to develop their:

- Motor skills
- Knowledge and behaviors for active living
- Physical fitness
- Teamwork
- Self-efficacy
- Emotional intelligence



Did you know?

SHAPE America and the CDC [recommend](#) that all students participate in daily physical education in grades K-12, totaling 150 minutes per week in elementary school and 225 minutes per week in middle school and high school.

Incorporating social and emotional learning into physical activity and physical education

Physical educators are on the front lines of the social and emotional learning (SEL) movement. In preparing for school reentry, incorporating SEL will be essential to supporting students through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Physical education instruction naturally supports and aligns with the [Core SEL Competencies](#) from Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), by teaching students skills like:

- Teamwork
- Self-awareness
- Responsible decision-making
- Stress management
- Problem-solving
- Goal-setting

These social skills help support students' health, well-being, and resilience, making physical education especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Children of all ages are struggling with the ensuing stress and trauma. While adversity impacts learning, these effects can be mitigated by strong, trusting relationships and opportunities to develop social and emotional learning (SEL) skills.”

— [Forbes](#)

Defining physical activity

Physical activity is bodily movement of any type, which includes recreational, fitness, and sport activities like jumping rope, playing soccer, and lifting weights, as well as daily activities like walking to the store or taking the stairs. Schools should offer recess and classroom-based physical activity as opportunities for students to engage in physical activity throughout the school day.

Recess

[Recess](#) shouldn't be eliminated if schools are operating under a model of in-school instruction with physical distancing. Recess helps students achieve the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day for children and adolescents, which can improve strength and endurance, enhance academic achievement, and increase self-esteem.

Providing students with opportunities for free play, physical activity, and social interactions is especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic as schools navigate the challenges of physical distancing and virtual learning.

(continues)

[Recess](#) also helps students practice social skills, such as:

- Cooperation
- Following rules
- Problem-solving
- Negotiation
- Leadership
- Sharing
- Communication

Defining physical activity *(continued)*

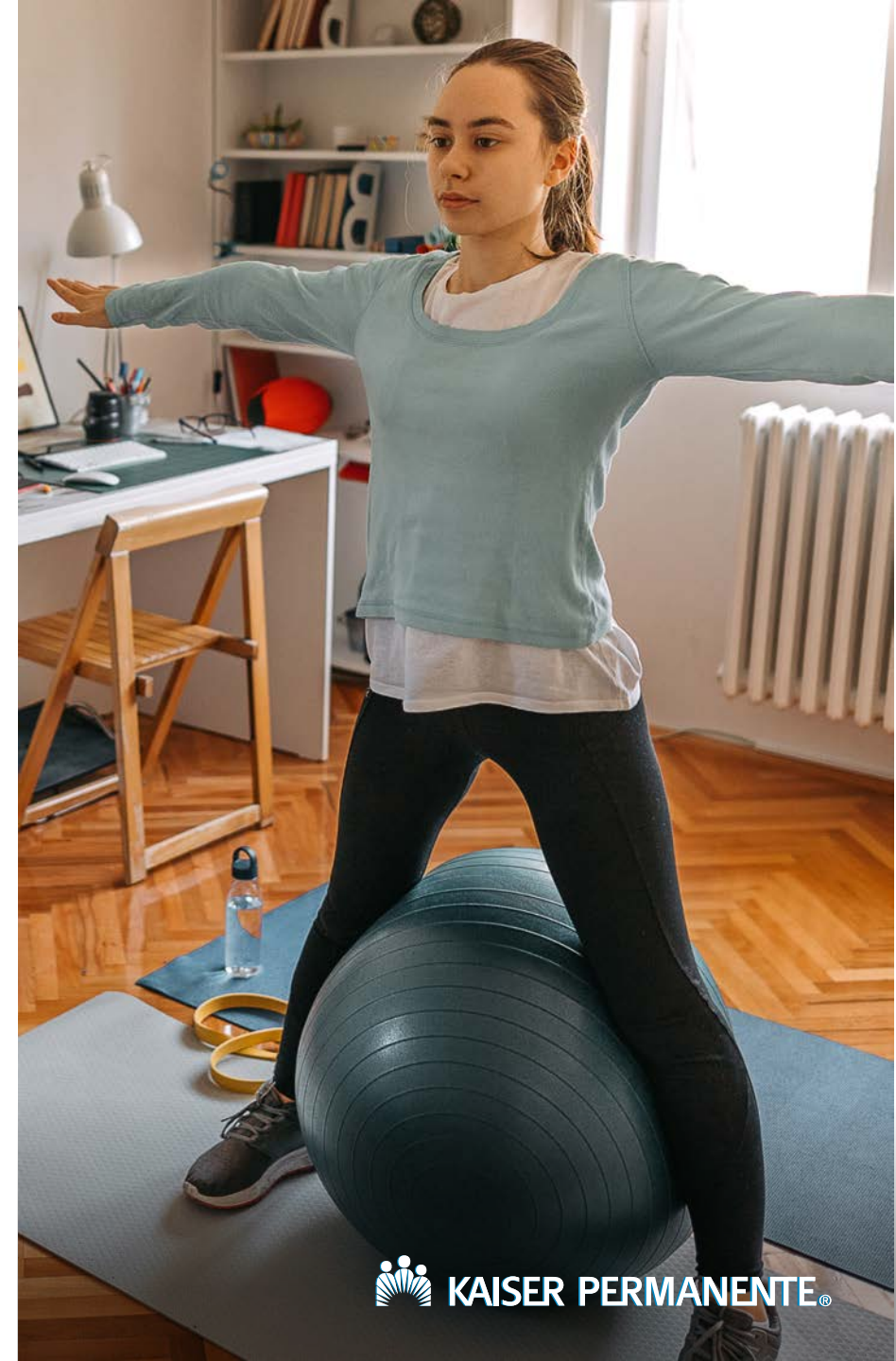
Classroom physical activity

While maintaining physical distancing measures is critical in mitigating the spread of COVID-19, staff and teachers must provide opportunities for students to be active throughout the school day. Incorporating activity breaks [during classroom learning](#) or transitions can increase the amount of time students are physically active.

Classroom-based physical activity improves students':

- Concentration and attention
- Behavior and motivation
- Sense of community
- Engagement in the learning process
- Academic performance

Providing opportunities for classroom-based physical activity can also help mitigate feelings of stress and anxiety brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Preparing for reopening

SHAPE America's [School Reentry Considerations: K-12 Physical Education, Health Education, and Physical Activity](#) provides schools with school reentry considerations and recommendations based on CDC recommendations as well as national recommendations for [physical education](#), [health education](#), [recess](#), and [classroom physical activity](#). Refer to it for in-depth guidance on preparing an environment for safe and supportive instruction in physical education and physical activity.



The 5 starter plays for implementing physical activity and physical education during reopening

Use these 5 starter plays to lay the groundwork for developing a safer physical activity and physical education program. The plays are useful in both in-person and virtual learning environments.



1. Require physical education instruction

Require physical education instruction from certified physical educators for all students, in both in-person and virtual learning environments.



2. Make necessary accommodations

Adjust physical education instruction to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for staff, teachers, and students. Consider SHAPE America's recommendations for the [physical environment](#), [personal hygiene](#), [equipment safety and sanitation](#), and [instructional strategies](#).



3. Provide professional development

Provide professional development to physical education teachers and recess supervisors on schoolwide [COVID-19 mitigation protocols](#), equipment sanitation, and virtual learning strategies.



4. Offer recess in person or virtually

Offer recess, whether in person or virtually, to all students, and don't withhold recess from a student as punishment.



5. Offer physical activity in person or virtually

Offer opportunities for classroom physical activity during in-person instruction, and provide caregivers with strategies for physical activity breaks for students for the virtual environment.



1. Require physical education instruction

Require physical education instruction from certified physical educators for all students, in both in-person and virtual learning environments.

- Physical education teachers should conduct an [at-home student survey](#) to design equitable and appropriate learning experiences for their students. This helps to clearly communicate expectations for student learning and build meaningful relationships with students and their families.
- [Include students with disabilities](#) in both in-person and virtual physical education instruction. Adapt teaching strategies, equipment, environments, and assessments to meet the needs of all students.





2. Make necessary accommodations

Make necessary accommodations for physical education instruction to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for staff, teachers, and students. Consider SHAPE America's recommendations for the [physical environment](#), [personal hygiene](#), [equipment safety and sanitation](#), and [instructional strategies](#).

- For in-person instruction, focus on [activities](#) that require no person-to-person contact and limited or no physical activity equipment, such as yoga, dance and rhythms, fitness, outdoor pursuits, and kicking and throwing target games.
- For virtual learning instruction, focus on [activities](#) that can be done in small spaces and that use equipment that can be accessed at home (for example, rolled-up socks as a ball for tossing and catching, or a laundry basket as a goal or target).





3. Provide professional development

Provide professional development to physical education teachers and recess supervisors on schoolwide [COVID-19 prevention protocols](#), equipment sanitation, and virtual learning strategies.





4. Offer recess in person or virtually

Offer recess, whether in person or virtually, to all students, and don't withhold recess from a student as punishment.

- Utilize multiple locations for recess throughout the school and school grounds to reduce the number of students playing in one area.
- Ensure sufficient adult supervision.
- Limit use of play structures or play equipment.
- Physical education teachers should provide students and caregivers with guidance, resources, and [suggested physical activities](#) to help students participate in daily physical activity when learning from home.

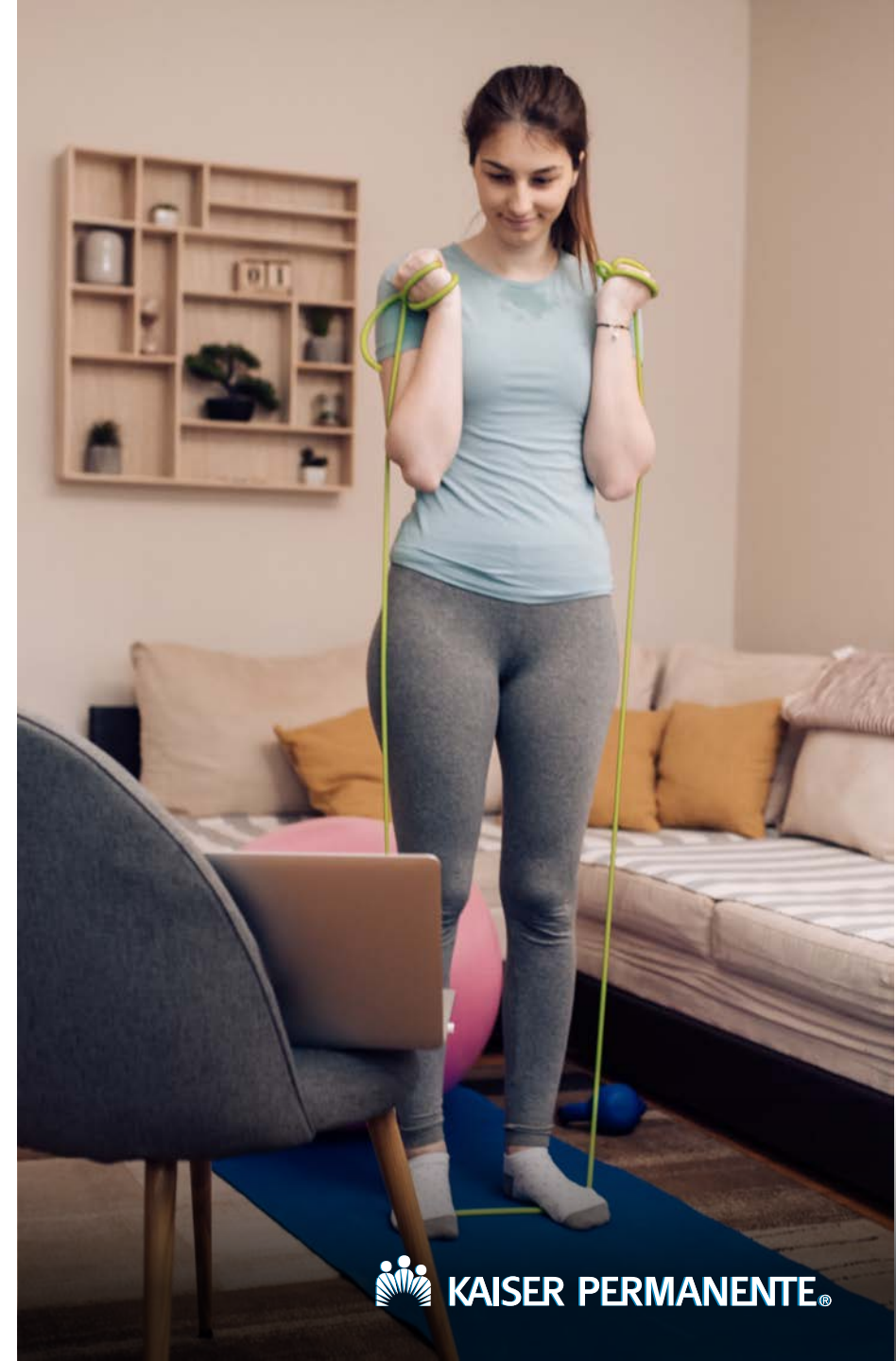




5. Offer physical activity in person or virtually

Offer opportunities for classroom physical activity during in-person instruction, and provide caregivers with strategies for physical activity breaks for students for the virtual environment.

- Provide teachers with example classroom-based [physical activities](#) that can be used to increase student engagement, build community within the classroom, and reestablish rapport between students and teachers.
- Increase the emphasis on incorporating physical activity during transitions, the beginning of the school day, and the closing of the school day.
- Provide caregivers with example [activities](#) that students and families can participate in daily to stay physically active and mentally healthy at home.



Checklist: The 5 starter plays for implementing physical activity and physical education during reopening

Print this page to help track your progress toward completing the 5 starter steps.



1. Require physical education instruction

- ☐ Physical education teachers should conduct an [at-home student survey](#) to design equitable and appropriate learning experiences for their students. This helps to clearly communicate expectations for student learning and build meaningful relationships with students and their families.
- ☐ [Include students with disabilities](#) in both in-person and virtual physical education instruction. Adapt teaching strategies, equipment, environments, and assessments to meet the needs of all students.



2. Make necessary accommodations

- ☐ For in-person instruction, focus on [activities](#) that require no person-to-person contact and limited or no physical activity equipment, such as yoga, dance and rhythms, fitness, outdoor pursuits, and kicking and throwing target games.
- ☐ For virtual learning instruction, focus on [activities](#) that can be done in small spaces and that use equipment that can be accessed at home (for example, rolled-up socks as a ball for tossing and catching, or a laundry basket as a goal or target).



3. Provide professional development

- ☐ Provide professional development to physical education teachers and recess supervisors on schoolwide COVID-19 mitigation protocols, equipment sanitation, and virtual learning strategies.



4. Offer recess in person and virtually

- ☐ Utilize multiple locations for recess throughout the school and school grounds to reduce the number of students playing in one area.
- ☐ Ensure sufficient adult supervision.
- ☐ Limit use of play structures or play equipment.
- ☐ Physical education teachers should provide students and caregivers with guidance, resources, and [suggested physical activities](#) to help students participate in daily physical activity when learning from home.



5. Offer physical activity in person or virtually

- ☐ Provide teachers with example classroom-based [physical activities](#) that can be used to increase student engagement, build community within the classroom, and reestablish rapport between students and teachers.
- ☐ Increase the emphasis on incorporating physical activity during transitions, the beginning of the school day, and the closing of the school day.
- ☐ Provide caregivers with example [activities](#) that students and families can participate in daily to stay physically active and mentally healthy at home.

Additional district and school resources

- [School Reentry Considerations: K-12 Physical Education, Health Education, and Physical Activity](#) – SHAPE America
- [Essential Components of Physical Education](#) – SHAPE America
- [Guidelines for K-12 Online Physical Education](#) – SHAPE America
- [Strategies for Recess](#) – SHAPE America
- [Statement on Recess](#) – Global Recess Alliance
- [Strategies for Classroom Physical Activity](#) – Springboard to Active Schools
- [An Initial Guide to Leveraging the Power of Social and Emotional Learning](#) – CASEL
- [School Reentry Considerations for Supporting Student Social and Emotional Learning and Mental and Behavioral Health](#) – American School Counselor Association and National Association of School Psychologists
- [Supporting Marginalized Students in Stressful Times: Tips for Educators](#) – National Association of School Psychologists

Chapter 5

Staff and teacher well-being

Supporting your staff's well-being is an essential component to your reopening strategy.

Key takeaways:

- Identify the existing challenges in education.
- Understand the impact of COVID-19 on staff and teachers.
- Support a holistic approach to well-being.
- Utilize the 5 starter plays for enhancing staff and teacher well-being.



In partnership with



Introduction and purpose

Staff and teachers play a critical role in the lives of our nation's youth. For school and district staff to do their best work, it's important to support their health and well-being — and to do it in a way that honors their unique identities, promotes diversity of thought, and encourages collaboration.

This chapter of the Planning for the Next Normal at School playbook focuses on:

- Guidance on the various stressors challenging your staff and teachers
- Recommendations on how to provide a foundation of support for individuals and groups
- The 5 starter plays for enhancing staff and teacher well-being — a framework to help ensure your staff and teachers have the training and resources they need to maintain and support the well-being of themselves and their students

We'll continue to update this content as guidance and circumstances change.
For more information, please [contact us](#).

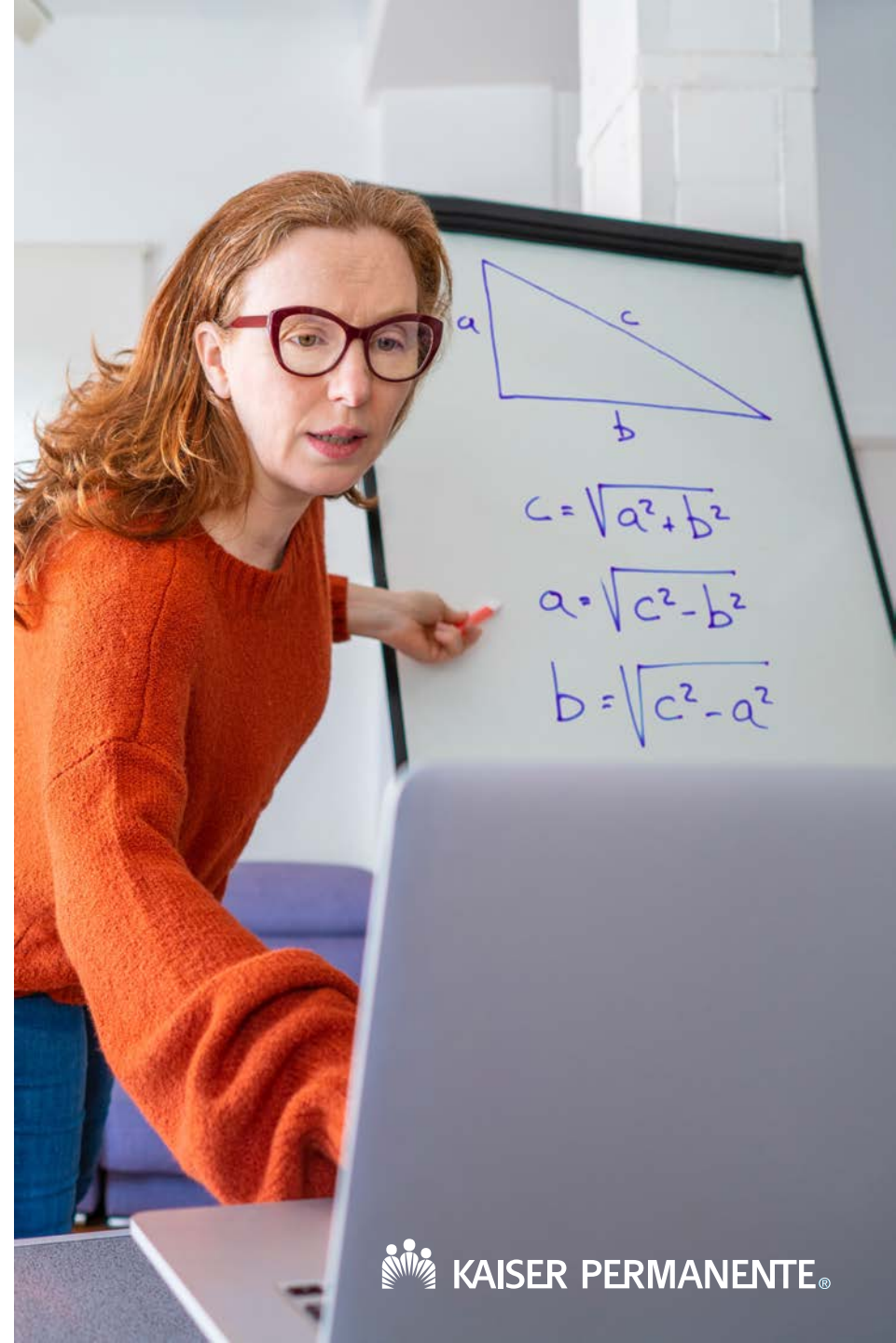
COVID-19's impact on existing challenges in education

Education is a rewarding, but challenging job. [Increasing job demands combined with declining salaries](#) have created an unstable infrastructure for one of the most noble professions. The onset of COVID-19 has further compounded many challenges of today's educational system. And since school climate and teaching effectiveness are key drivers of student learning, it's critical to start to consider the adverse working conditions within your school environment.

- **Before COVID-19**
[Difficulty recruiting and retaining educators](#)
- **During COVID-19**
[Higher levels of stress and burnout](#)

The growing roles and responsibilities of educators

To manage the personal disruptions and health concerns millions of Americans now face, school and district staff are taking on new roles, such as virtual educators, community technology support, and meal distributors — often without additional resources or training. While policymakers are navigating [changes to accountability systems, meal distribution, and instructional minutes](#), staff and teachers are rapidly shifting to remote work environments to continue supporting the nation's youth. In many ways, COVID-19 is heaping more stress on an already stressed workforce.



Addressing the impact of COVID-19 on staff and teachers

The impact of COVID-19 on staff and teachers will come from the convergence of several distinct, but related issues.



Implementing new public health measures

Public health experts agree that COVID-19 will continue into fall and beyond. This increases the need for public health measures in schools (see [Chapter 2](#)). Staff and teachers will need to prepare for a different type of school year that includes virtual, in-person, and hybrid learning environments, as well as rolling closures in response to spikes in COVID-19 cases.



Protecting aging and vulnerable staff

The demographic composition of the education profession amplifies stress in several distinct ways. [About 1 in 3 educators are older than 50](#) — an age group that's at greater risk of contracting COVID-19, experiencing more severe symptoms, and suffering from a higher mortality rate.



Managing a lack of diversity

Only [16% of teachers are Black or Hispanic](#). Compared to white Americans, people of color, Indigenous, and Black Americans [experience greater stress and harm in the workplace](#), higher COVID-19 death and illness rates, and the [additional burden of finding solutions for racialized education policies](#).



Addressing a disproportionately female workforce

[Women make up over 75% of the workforce](#). Since [women are more likely to take on unpaid care work](#), many female educators will be caring for students, children, or older adults in an intensified way. [Men also hold more educational leadership positions](#), and thus hold more influence over policy and implementation practices.



Preparing for economic uncertainty

The economic downturn caused by the pandemic creates further uncertainty and could have [devastating effects on school budgets](#). Even though the full impact is unknown, knowing about the potential of budget cuts can create instability and stress in staff and teachers, who might worry about job loss, increased class sizes, and lacking resources to adequately do their jobs.

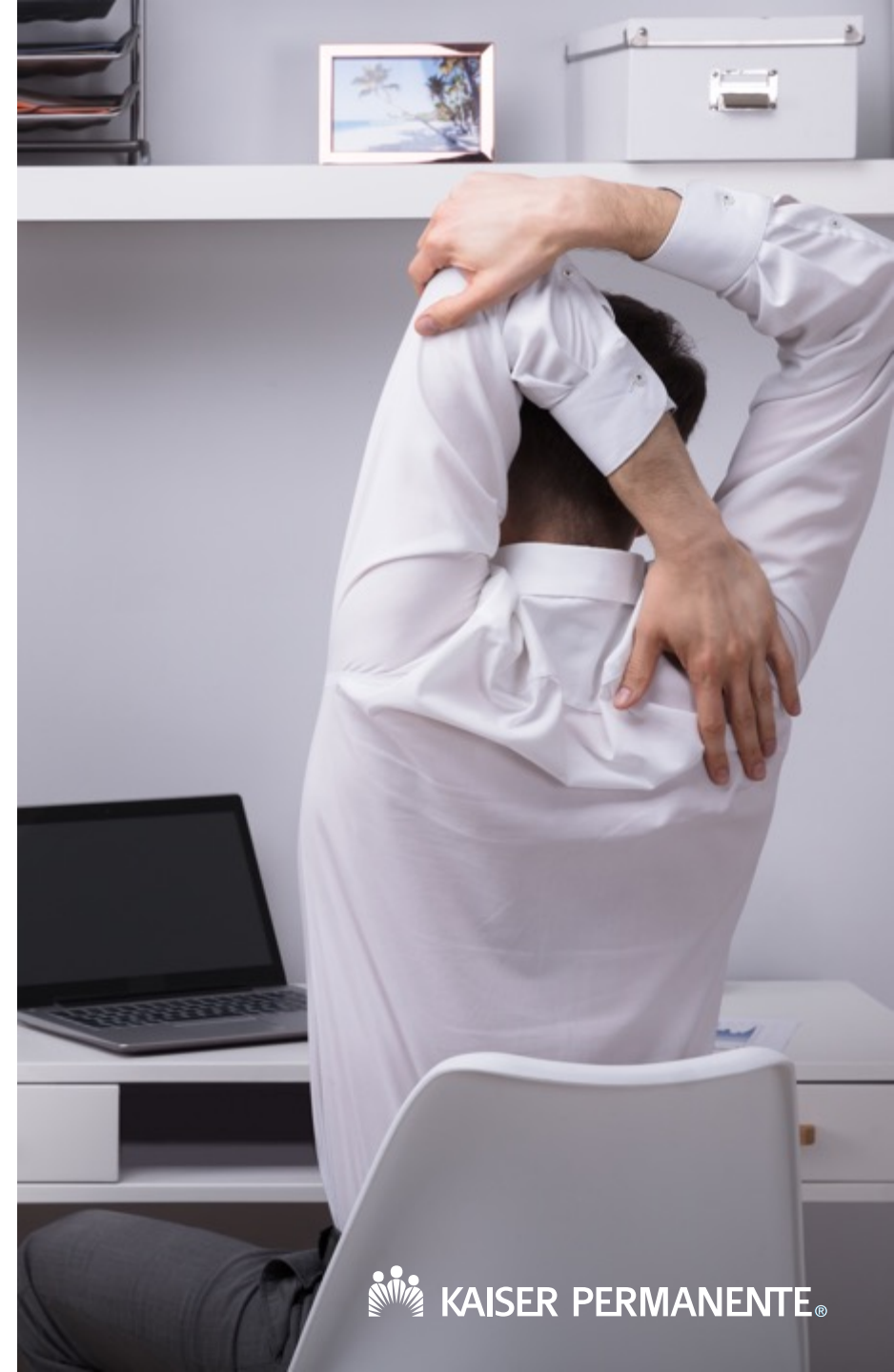
Any one of these demographic amplifiers can create uniquely stressful circumstances for education staff. Staff who [experience an intersection](#) of more than one of these elements may feel stress even more acutely than their peers. Therefore, it's important for schools to address the health and wellness of staff and teachers from a whole-person perspective and consider the unique identities of their education community. Schools should also regularly reflect on the power dynamics between school stakeholder groups (for example, administrators and teachers, teachers and support staff, etc.) and determine whether practices between and within stakeholder groups add additional stress or promote healthy, healing cultures.

Addressing the compounding effects of stress

[Stress significantly affects our ability to think and learn](#) — in both adults and children. Of course, the same holds true for educators.

- Stressed staff and teachers are [less likely to form positive connections with their students](#), which can negatively affect student achievement and degrade school culture.
- Stressed [specialized instructional support personnel](#), such as school nurses, psychologists, and counselors, might overlook important risk factors and delay treatment for the students they support.

By making staff and teacher well-being a central component of school reopening, you'll help create a more effective workforce and a healthier school environment.



Championing a holistic approach to well-being

To build a [highly effective workplace](#), it's more important than ever to help ensure the psychological safety of your staff and teachers, as well as promote clarity and transparency. Schools and districts should also support holistic self-care beyond physical and mental health. By building a workplace that focuses on psychological safety and holistic well-being, schools and districts can mitigate the negative effects of COVID-19 and establish a thriving school.

Workers report greater satisfaction in life when caring for [these 5 key areas of well-being](#):



Physical



Career



Social



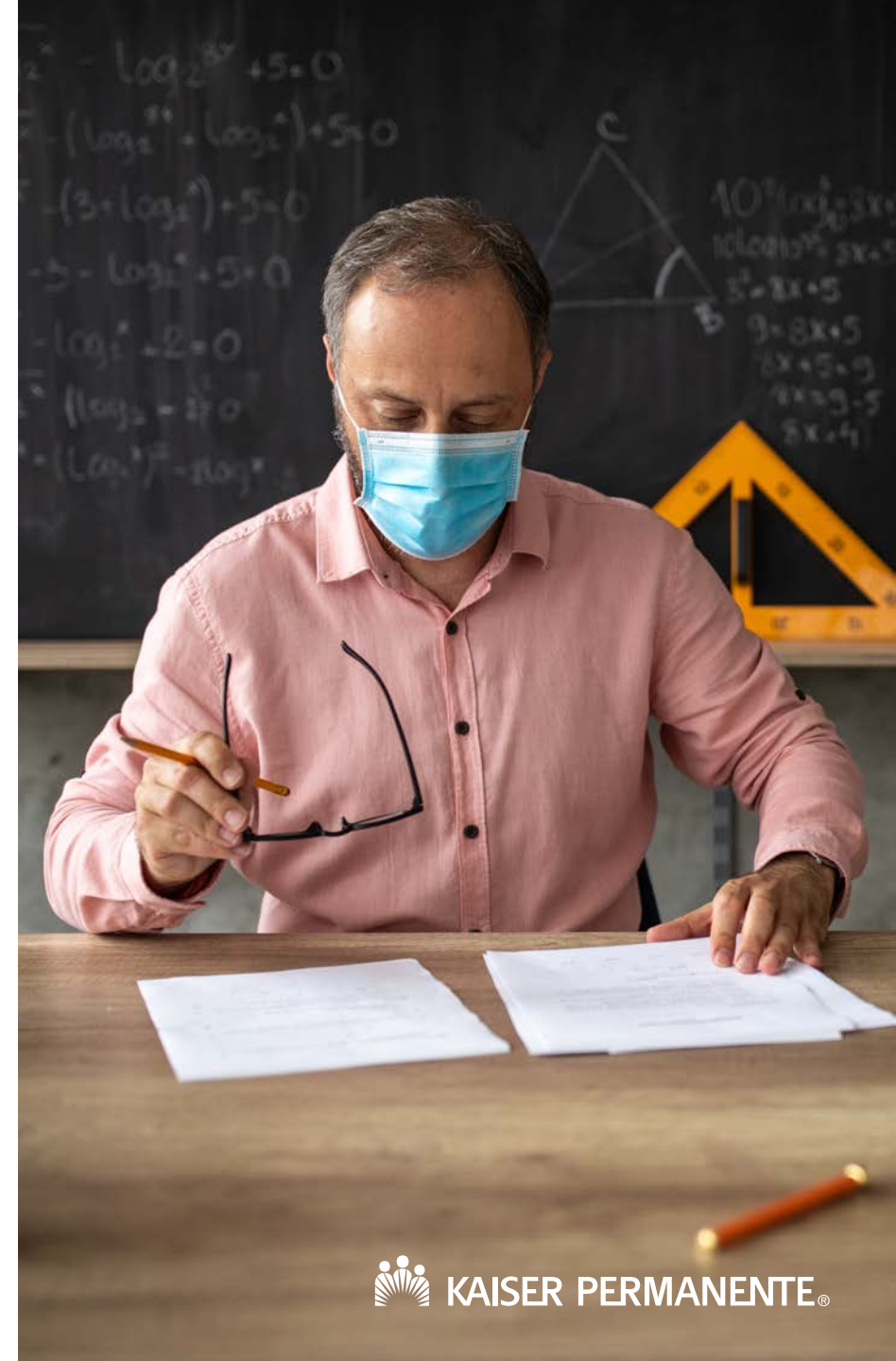
Community



Financial

Providing a foundation of support

To do their jobs well, staff and teachers need to feel safe and supported within their work environments. While there are many unknowns as schools and districts work on their plans to reopen, it's critical to prioritize a culture of well-being. The 5 starter plays for enhancing staff and teacher well-being can help get you started and ensure that all employees have the emotional, physical, and social resources they need to support themselves and their students.



The 5 starter plays for enhancing staff and teacher well-being

Use these 5 starter plays to lay the groundwork for a well-being strategy that prioritizes the health of your staff and teachers. The plays are useful in both in-person and virtual learning environments.



1. Include staff in strategy development

Ensure school reopening plans account for the unique identities and needs of all staff and teachers and connect them to your decision-making process.



2. Prepare staff

Make sure that staff and teachers are prepared to successfully implement your reopening plans.



3. Foster resilience

Prioritize and promote resilience and collective well-being within the entire school community.



4. Empower personal well-being

Encourage your staff and teachers to prioritize their individual health and well-being.



5. Provide resources

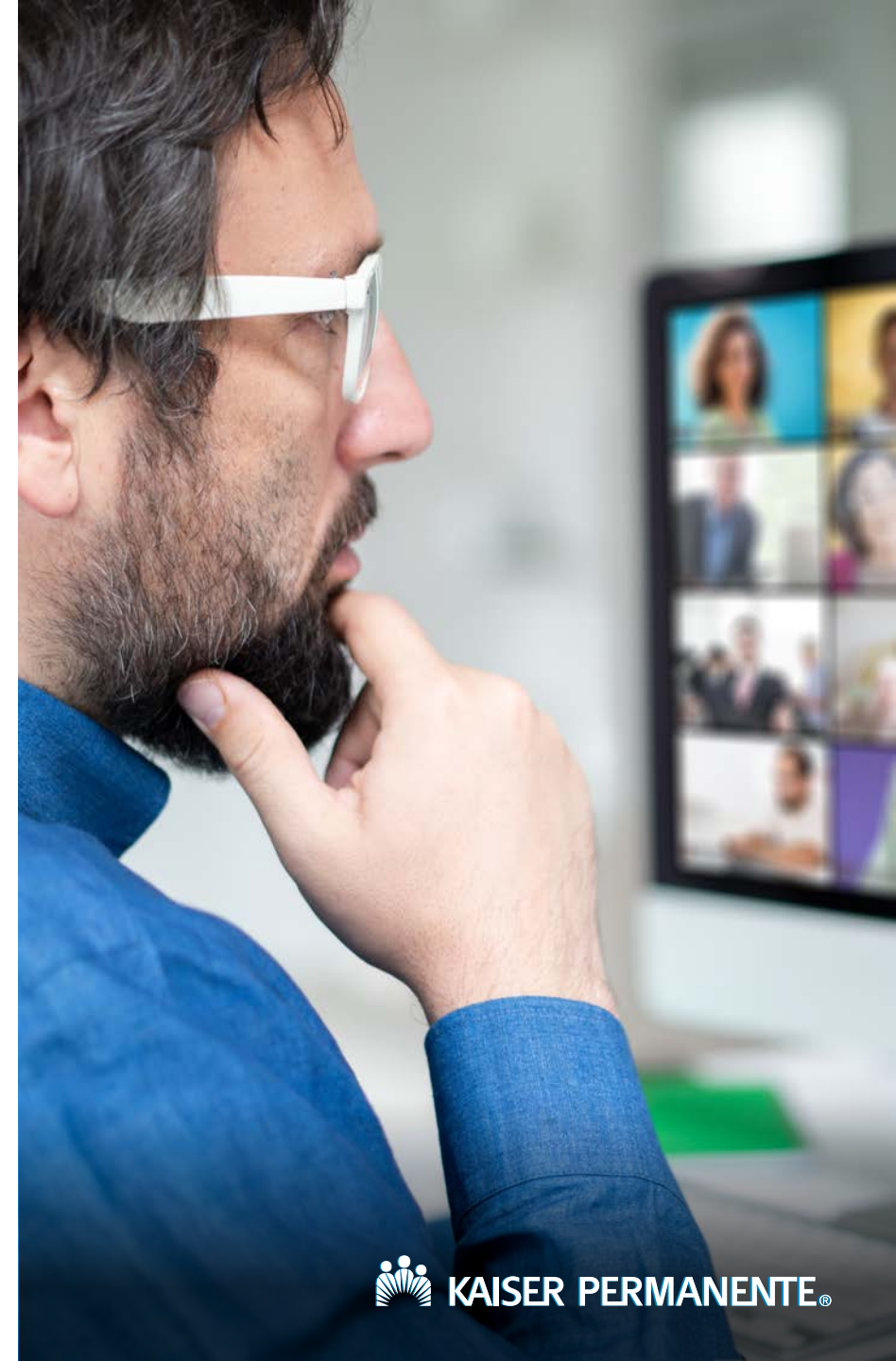
Ensure staff and teachers can access resources to help cope with the effects of COVID-19.



1. Include staff in strategy development

Ensure school reopening plans account for the unique identities and needs of all staff and teachers and connect them to your decision-making process.

- Collaborate with staff, teachers, and local bargaining units on stratified options for school reopening and work duties based on COVID-19 risk.
- Provide continuous professional learning on the unique impact COVID-19 has on your school community, with an emphasis on equity, [racial justice](#), and health access.
- Regularly gather, review, and address feedback on the effectiveness of your reopening plans from staff, teachers, the school community, and individual school stakeholder groups (see [starter play 3, Chapter 2](#)).

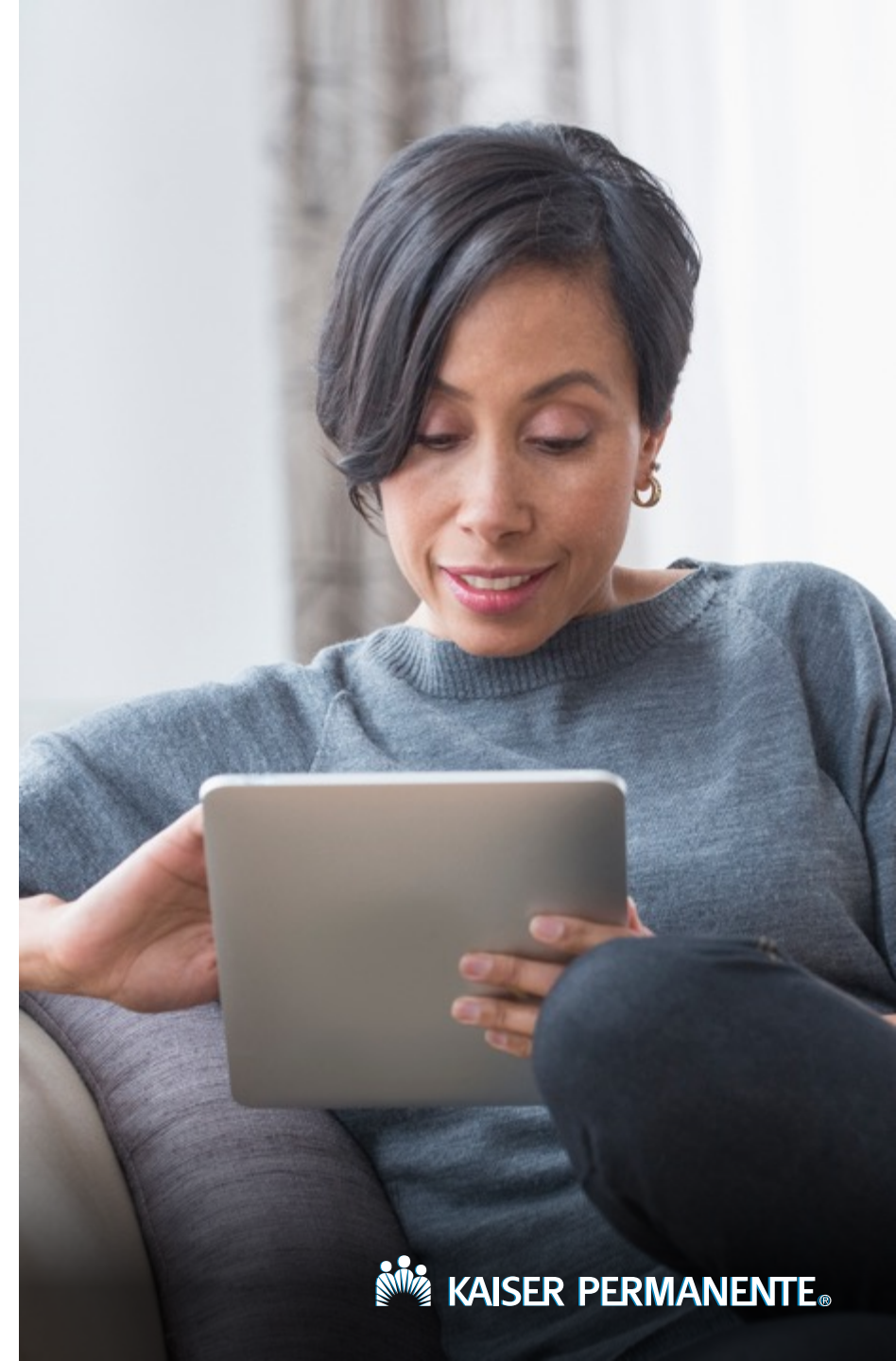




2. Prepare staff

Make sure that staff and teachers are prepared to successfully implement your reopening plans.

- Provide continuous professional learning opportunities to staff and teachers that are specific to their job duties (for example, [virtual learning techniques](#), local public health guidance, and alternative transportation plans).
- Build processes that promote consistent, ongoing discussion between staff, teachers, and administration to help them [express emotions](#) (such as anxiety over implementing new procedures) and collaborate on solutions.
- Develop clear and consistent messages that your staff and teachers can share with students, parents, and the school community.





3. Foster resilience

Prioritize and promote [resilience](#) and collective well-being within the entire school community.

- Build in time during staff meetings to connect as a group. Consider including parents and caregivers to help build a sense of community and trust.
- Provide opportunities for [collaboration](#) and shared decision-making between staff, teachers, and administration about their well-being.
- Engage staff and teachers during the workday with well-being activities, such as [expressing gratitude](#), [engaging in physical activity](#), or [sharing healthy recipes](#).





4. Empower personal well-being

Encourage your staff and teachers to prioritize their individual health and well-being.

- Provide continuous professional learning on the [cycle of burnout](#) and [stress reduction strategies](#).
- Allow staff and teachers to schedule time or take breaks to [care for their well-being](#).
- Set clear and realistic expectations for working hours, particularly when working remotely.





5. Provide resources

Ensure staff and teachers can access resources to help cope with the effects of COVID-19.

- Promote district-sponsored health offerings, such as [COVID-19 resources](#), employee assistance programs, and well-being program resources.
- Engage with staff, teachers, and local bargaining units to review and revise your [human resource policies](#) (for example, paid sick time, return-to-work schedules, and adjusted working hours).
- Connect employees to community and financial-planning resources, such as SNAP and Medicaid.



Checklist: The 5 starter plays for enhancing staff and teacher well-being

Print this page to help track your progress toward completing the 5 starter steps.



1. Include staff in strategy development

- ☐ Collaborate with staff, teachers, and local bargaining units on your reopening plan and work duties.
- ☐ Provide professional learning on the impact COVID-19 has on your school, equity, racial justice, and health access.
- ☐ Gather, review, and address feedback on the effectiveness of your reopening plans.



2. Prepare staff

- ☐ Provide job-specific development opportunities, such as virtual learning techniques.
- ☐ Build processes that help staff and teachers express emotions and collaborate on solutions.
- ☐ Develop clear and consistent messages to use throughout your school community.



3. Foster resilience

- ☐ Build in time during meetings for staff, parents, and caregivers to connect.
- ☐ Provide opportunities for collaboration and shared decision-making about employee well-being.
- ☐ Engage staff and teachers during the workday with well-being activities.



4. Empower personal well-being

- ☐ Provide learning opportunities on burnout and stress reduction.
- ☐ Allow staff and teachers to schedule breaks to care for their well-being.
- ☐ Set clear and realistic expectations for in-person and virtual working hours.



5. Provide resources

- ☐ Promote district-sponsored health offerings.
- ☐ Review and revise your human resource policies.
- ☐ Connect employees to community and financial-planning resources.

Additional district and school administrator resources

- [School employee well-being](#) – Thriving Schools, Kaiser Permanente
- [Caring for the Education Community Webinar Series](#) – Thriving Schools, Kaiser Permanente
 - Navigating Uncertainty: Stress Management for Educators
 - Comprehensive Self-Care for Educators
 - Finding Balance in Disorienting Times
- [Filling Your Cup: Comprehensive Self-Care Strategies](#) – Alliance for a Healthier Generation
- [RISE Foundational Professional Development](#) – Alliance for a Healthier Generation
- [Teachers Are Anxious and Overwhelmed. They Need SEL Now More Than Ever.](#)
- [How to Foster a Positive School Climate in a Virtual World](#)
- [All Hands on Deck: Initial Guidance Regarding Reopening School Buildings](#) (see “Prioritize Mental Health and Social and Emotional Supports for Students and Staff” and “Support Educator Success” sections) – National Education Association
- [Self-Care Strategies for Educators During the Coronavirus Crisis: Supporting Personal Social and Emotional Well-Being](#) – WestEd
- [CASEL: SEL Guidance for Reopening](#) (see section about adults) – Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

Instituting a holistic plan for reopening schools

While COVID-19 is affecting everyone, the pandemic is affecting communities in different ways across the country. This impact can ebb and flow throughout the school year and manifest differently depending on the person and setting (for example, in-person versus virtual instruction). Therefore, districts and schools must implement processes focused on the physical, mental, social, and economic well-being of staff, teachers, students, and communities.

When applied in consideration with local needs, the starter plays will help promote health, safety, and connectedness for all. Districts and schools are not alone in this endeavor and are encouraged to collaborate with state education agencies and community partners to fully support the work. By working together to implement the starter plays, schools and districts will be well-positioned to rebuild a safe and supportive school experience.

This playbook is provided for informational purposes and should not be considered comprehensive or definitive instructions for safely reopening your school or school district. As the environment continues to quickly evolve, we encourage you to stay up to date with the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), your local department of health, and any relevant national and local regulations.

Kaiser Permanente does not necessarily endorse the services mentioned. Any organizations listed are for easy identification only.



Survey

We plan to periodically update this playbook, and your feedback is important. Please take this anonymous survey to let us know what you found valuable and what you would like to see included in the future.

Two easy options:

- Open your internet browser and type in <https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/5709938/PNN-At-School-Playbook>
- Open your smartphone camera, focus it on the QR code, and then click on the notification that pops up