

Education and Childcare Committee Recommendations to the ReOpen DC Advisory Group Steering Committee



May 21, 2020

For more information, and to see the ReOpen DC Advisory Group Steering Committee's full recommendations, please visit <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/>.

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OVERVIEW

Throughout this public health crisis, our city has been reminded that our educational institutions are more than centers of learning – they serve as the heart of our communities. As the District evaluates the best path forward for reopening, the District’s education sector merits special attention and consideration. A phased reopening of schools, higher educational institutions, and childcare centers presents clear health challenges, and also exceptionally important opportunities for the continuation of student learning and for the reopening of other sectors of the economy.¹ Schools are the bedrock of family, community, and business. The ReOpen DC Education and Childcare Committee, hereafter referred to as the committee, is focused on meeting the emerging needs of students, families, and the city- –at -large in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and keeping health and safety at the core of all decision-making. The committee’s analysis and recommendations encompass institutions across the education sector including childcare facilities, pre-kindergarten through 12th grade schools (PK-12), higher education institutions, libraries, adult education facilities, and out- of- school- time settings.

The committee has worked across sectors toward one primary goal: providing every student in the District with a high-quality education that meets their academic and social-emotional needs within an environment that prioritizes the health and safety of all students, educators and families. Toward this goal, the committee recommends strategies the city can implement to identify new tools or resources needed for reopening all aspects of education across the District, close the digital divide, reimagine physical learning environments, and improve distance learning practices.

It is important to note that all determinations about when schools can open are decided by DC Health, and that the role of this committee is to examine the strategies and considerations for how to do so only after DC Health’s approval to transition into a next phase.

At the same time as the committee puts forth recommendations, they recognize that the city’s planning must continue to evolve as health conditions change and as more data and scientific evidence about the impacts of COVID-19 become available.

Our three focus areas are:

- **Ensuring equity.** Our committee has committed to putting forward recommendations that meet the needs of all students and do not put any students or student groups at a disadvantage; we focus on recommendations that ensure safety and access to

¹ UNICEF. 2020 “Framework for Reopening Schools.” <https://www.unicef.org/media/68366/file/Framework-for-reopening-schools-2020.pdf>.

opportunity for all, with a special emphasis on meeting the health and educational needs of every student, regardless of circumstances.

- **Understanding health risks and honoring the best-known mitigation strategies.** We have worked closely with DC Health, and explored public health best practices to inform this work. Our recommendations are based in risk-mitigation strategies that are designed to keep our students, their families, and our teachers and staff safe. In particular, we ground our recommendations in the constraints that schools should maintain six feet of distance between students; schools should disinfect high-contact surfaces daily and engage in enhanced deep cleanings; and cohorts of students should mix as infrequently as possible, if at all.
- **Delivering the highest-quality, whole-student learning experience for every child within the constraints imposed by the pandemic.** Health and safety considerations will shift our understanding of how schools operate for the next year or more. DC schools have already pivoted quickly and well. Going forward, the District can build on current success, fill gaps in provision, and continue to improve instructional delivery as a system.

These focus areas led the committee to ground our reflections and planning against the following six goals for the education community in Washington, DC. Above all else, these goals show a prioritization for the physical, academic and social-emotional health of our youth, educators and families and a commitment to use this moment to create a more equitable DC for all.

- **Protect students, educators and families** from severe outbreaks. Reduce the number of deaths, with a particular focus on variables affecting students and families in vulnerable situations.
- Confirm that schools, childcare centers, and institutions of higher education are **safe places for teaching, learning and enrichment**.
- Make certain that **every student has access to technology and the internet** to continue learning and workforce development training at home.
- Ensure schools deliver **quality instruction for all students** both when students are in the classroom and when students are learning at home, and that schools are **prepared to pivot quickly** between these modes.
- Provide necessary support so that public school students in DC are
 - **On track academically** and progressing toward grade-level learning outcomes and
 - Receiving the **academic supports** they need to feel present and engaged while learning either at home or in the classroom.
- Care for the **well-being of the whole child**, including their physical, social, mental, and emotional health. As the District plans for recovery, and considers the long-term

implications on student mental health, center the work around the guiding principles of “relationships, routines, and resilience.”²

- Promote cross-sector solutions, including **interagency actions and philanthropic efforts that enhance student safety, mental health, and remote learning outcomes, now and after the permanent reopening** of childcare, schools, and universities.

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Committee Community Co-Chair: Charlene Drew Jarvis

Committee Government Co-Chair: Paul Kihn

Public Health Advisors: Dr. Preetha Iyengar, Dr. Ankoor Shah

Legal Advisor: Sarah Jane Forman

Associate Committee Director: Rich Harrington

Committee Coordinator: Adanna Mbanugo

COMMITTEE MEMBER

² Turnaround for Children.

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CURRENT STATUS ACROSS THE EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE SECTORS

In response to the growing COVID-19 pandemic, all **DC Public Schools (DCPS) and public charter schools** closed for in-person schooling on March 16 by order of Mayor Muriel Bowser. Students in DCPS schools commenced distance learning on March 24, while charter local education agencies (LEAs) reopened for distance learning on varying timetables. On April 17, Mayor Bowser announced that DCPS schools would continue distancing learning through the end of the school year and would end their academic calendar early, with the last day of school being May 29. Public charter schools were encouraged to follow a similar schedule. Of the 62 public charter LEAs, all have continued to deliver instruction from a remote position, and many are also ending their school year on May 29.

Throughout the public health emergency, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) has encouraged **childcare providers** to follow the DCPS closing status and voluntarily close their buildings to protect public health and safety, while also recognizing that many families, particularly those of essential workers, would continue to have important childcare needs. Childcare was defined as an essential business under the public health emergency, so childcare providers have had the option to remain open. Additionally, OSSE set up six childcare centers to serve the children of healthcare workers, first responders, and essential government employees and contractors. For providers who have remained open, OSSE has issued health and safety guidance based on the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and DC Health. To help stabilize the sector, OSSE continued providing public subsidy payments to participating providers, even those who chose to close, based on enrollment of children and past average monthly payments, instead of daily attendance. In keeping with DC Government's recommendation, most of Washington, DC's licensed childcare providers have chosen to close during the public health emergency. As of late April, 38 out of DC's 470 licensed child development facilities remain open.

This spring, all **higher educational institutions** shifted their course offerings online in response to COVID-19. The status of university housing and campus opening has varied based on the institution. All universities continue to deliver virtual instruction to students for content areas that do not require hands-on learning experiences. Non-essential and non-emergency employees are teleworking.

ASSESSING RISK BY SECTOR

Education and childcare in Washington, DC is broken down into multiple settings: childcare facilities, PK-12 schools, adult schools, and institutions of higher education. Libraries also play a significant role in educating students in Washington, DC. Alternative schools are another unique school setting that operate most similarly to a traditional PK-12 school and should follow the guidelines laid out for that school setting.

The matrix below (Figure 1) provides a risk assessment for educational settings by examining contact intensity, number of contacts, and the degree to which activities can be modified to lower the risk of exposure and transmission.³

Contact intensity is measured by a combination of the potential closeness of contact and the duration of contact. Settings where people are closer for a longer period of time have a high “contact intensity” risk assessment. Number of contacts is the number of people expected to be in a specific location. A setting with a larger number of people at the same time has a high “number of contacts” risk assessment. Modification potential is how much the setting can be adapted to decrease the risk. Settings that can be changed to incorporate physical distancing effectively have a high “modification potential” risk assessment.

Figure 1. Risk Matrix for Education Sector

Sectors	Contact Intensity	# of Contacts	Modification Potential
Childcare Facilities	High	Medium/High	Low/Medium
PK-12 Schools	High	High	Low
Adult Schools & Institutions of Higher Education	High	High	High

Childcare facilities are considered to have a “high” contact intensity and number of contacts due to the number of individuals, including staff and children, who interact within a set space. However, the number of contacts can be considered “medium” in some circumstances due to limitations on the number of students served. Childcare facilities face restrictions on how much the setting can be adapted to decrease risk; however, the modification potential can be “medium” for those facilities that have greater control over their physical space or for infant classrooms where physical distancing can be managed by the childcare providers.

³ Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. 2020. “Public Health Principles for a Phased Reopening During COVID-19: Guidance for Governors.” https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/our-work/pubs_archive/pubs-pdfs/2020/200417-reopening-guidance-governors.pdf.

In traditional public school settings, students frequently interact in close quarters, be it in classrooms, hallways between classes, on the playground, or in the cafeteria. For these reasons, PK-12 schools are considered to have a “high” risk assessment for both the contact intensity and number of contacts factors. PK-12 schools were also assessed as having a “low” modification potential because the most easily implemented mitigation measures available are more likely to be “administrative controls,” such as guidance around washing hands frequently or the wearing of face masks, rather than “engineering controls,” such as physical distancing or physical barriers, which would require substantial modifications to school facilities.⁴

Similar to childcare facilities and PK-12 schools, universities are considered to have a “high” risk assessment for contact intensity and number of contacts due to the number of students, faculty and staff who interact on campus on a daily basis. Institutions of higher education also have a “high” modification potential but the ability to do so varies widely across schools and programs, and low and medium classifications in modification may be more appropriate in some cases. While all institutions moved to offering online courses this semester in response to the public health emergency, exhibiting high modification potential, this option may not be as practical at the beginning of a new academic year. Due to variations in campus size and design, student demographics, technological capacity, as well as other factors, each college and university faces varying levels of modification capabilities.

COMMITTEE APPROACH AND ENGAGEMENT

The committee recognizes that the process of reopening schools must be anchored in transparency to earn our community’s trust. This report is grounded in expert recommendations, both from public health experts and educational leaders, extensive stakeholder input, research, and the developing knowledge base around COVID-19.

The committee recognizes that the decision about when schools can reopen will be made by DC Health and, first and foremost, driven by public health experts. Therefore, the focus of this committee has been engaging with families, educators, students, and communities on how schools and other educational settings should reopen, and what procedures, systems and structures should be in place once DC Health has given its approval for the city to begin reopening schools.

⁴ Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. 2020. “Public Health Principles for a Phased Reopening During COVID-19: Guidance for Governors.” https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/our-work/pubs_archive/pubs-pdfs/2020/200417-reopening-guidance-governors.pdf.

As described in one stakeholder letter reviewed by the committee, “Parents Urge City to Address Critical Issues Re Learning in a Pandemic”: “While we have learned a lot, we still know so little. Data and information about COVID-19 and [l]earning [d]uring a [p]andemic will continue to grow and deepen.” The insights and perspective we have gathered from students, parents, teachers, leaders, childcare providers, and non-profits have deeply impacted the recommendations in the report and will continue to be integral for future iterations of planning and decision making. The committee recognizes that this report is a snapshot in time. We see this report as a living document that will need to be revisited continually as the city learns more and as the situation facing our community evolves.

The committee’s 25 members divided into working groups to address core questions across sectors. The questions were broken into categories that addressed childcare, PK-12 education, and higher education/adult education. Each working group conducted targeted outreach to stakeholders to better answer 11 core questions. Feedback was collected from each group and incorporated into the draft report before being presented to the full committee. The 11 working groups were broken down as follows:

Core Question	Committee Members
1. What conditions need to be in place to transition to the next phase?	Dr. Ankoor Shah, Jodi Ovca, Elizabeth Davis, Melissa Kim
2. In a phased reopening, what students should be brought back in a first wave?	Dr. Ankoor Shah, Jodi Ovca, Faith Gibson Hubbard
3. What is the social distancing guidance for schools?	Dr. Ankoor Shah, Elizabeth Davis, Faith Gibson Hubbard, Elena Bell
4. What, if any, additional supports do schools require to be ready to reopen in a next phase?	Dr. Ankoor Shah, Jodi Ovca, Elizabeth Davis, Faith Gibson Hubbard, Cathy Reilly, Pat Brantley
5. How can we ensure all students have access to the internet?	Ricarda M. Ganjam, Jonte Lee, Pat Brantley
6. What opportunities exist to coordinate across LEAs, and other sectors of the economy?	Jonte Lee, Cathy Reilly
7. How should we approach reopening childcare centers?	Faith Gibson Hubbard, Hanseul Kang
8. How should we approach reopening higher education institutions?	Ronald Mason, Patricia McGuire

9. How should we approach reopening adult schools?	Sonia Gutierrez
10. What do teachers and other staff need to be successful in the next phase?	LaTonya Henderson, Jonte Lee
11. What do parents and families need to feel confident and reengage successfully?	Ricarda M. Ganjam, Faith Gibson Hubbard, Cathy Reilly

Leveraging the work group structure and through individual conversations, the committee engaged with stakeholders across the District including students, families, teachers and school staff, LEA and school leaders, childcare providers, health officials, city agencies, community members, and non-governmental staff. To collect data efficiently, the committee pulled information from numerous outlets including, but not limited to, the results from public surveys, insights from stakeholder focus groups, and an additional Council-led survey. The committee has also taken into account guidelines and recommendations from the CDC and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg's School of Public Health's *Public Health Principles for a Phased Reopening During COVID-19: Guidance for Governors*.

In all, the committee collected research and feedback from 34 organizations and groups, along with thousands of survey respondents. The full list is located within the Resources, Research, and References section at the end of this document.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The committee engaged extensively across multiple stakeholder groups. The committee remains deeply appreciative to our members for their outreach, candor, and trust during this process and are most grateful to the thousands of residents who took time to engage in discussions and provide written feedback.

Parents & Families

Parent perspective grounded the core principles the committee selected to drive our recommendations. We recognize that families are deeply concerned about health and safety, and we have placed great emphasis on developing recommendations that take these considerations to heart. We engaged with families through surveys, focus groups, and community leader conversations. We also reviewed letters, emails, and petitions from families outlining their hopes, fears, and recommendations for reopening.

In particular, feedback from the Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE) Family Survey and subsequent town hall with Deputy Mayor Paul Kihn influenced this report. The PAVE survey reflects responses from 334 families, including 309 completed in English and 25 completed in Spanish, and represented children in educational settings from childcare centers to college. In

the survey and in the discussion with the Deputy Mayor for Education's Office, parents elevated homeschooling, access to digital devices, job stability, and family safety as their top concerns.

Other notable feedback came from the DC Education Coalition for Change, which conducted a month-long listening campaign with 837 students, parents, and teachers to identify concrete actions for the committee to consider. Their recommendations were centered around the committee's eleven core questions. The committee also reviewed a letter on behalf of parents and community leaders titled, "Parents Urge City to Address Critical Issues Re-Learning in a Pandemic." The letter's critical guiding principles helped shape the final report.

In addition, the DCPS Learning at Home Survey of nearly 4,400 families from the end of April through early May provided feedback about student learning activities, technology access, support structures, and general thoughts on how learning at home was working for families. Families identified their challenges with learning at home, shared preferred modes of communication, and identified areas for extra support such as mental and emotional health, food, and employment opportunities.

Students

This spring, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) facilitated six focus group discussions with a total of 57 students in grades 9-12 throughout the District to gather youth insights on engaging students, improving distance learning, and what additional supports students need. Students expressed a desire for student-centered communication via social media as well as a need for adults to have more flexibility and patience. Additionally, students identified three areas in which they need support: academics, accessing college and career opportunities, and mental health services.

The focus groups were composed of students from the following cross-sector schools and youth-serving organizations:

1. Cardozo Education Campus
2. Marion Barry Youth Leadership Institute Student Leaders
3. Marion Barry Youth Leadership Institute Seniors
4. Pathways 2 Power: Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter School
5. Roosevelt STAY High School
6. The Young Women's Project

LEA Leaders

On Thursday, March 12, 2020, in partnership with OSSE and the DC Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB), the DME held its first LEA leader discussion on matters related to COVID-19. This engagement was the beginning of a high-touch series with leaders and staff serving all 63 LEAs in the city. It included representation from DCPS, public charter schools, and education

partners. This regular hour-long engagement series began as a daily interaction and evolved to calls three times a week. This format has proved to be invaluable in terms of providing critical citywide updates, fielding questions, and generating collective solutions to emerging challenges. It has also helped to elevate core issues in a reliable format and sparked the genesis for 10 COVID-19 response work groups.

In addition to input from DCPS, the committee solicited direct input from public charter LEAs. For example, in late April, after the ReOpen DC Task Force was announced, members of the nonprofit Education Forward DC developed a survey for LEA leaders and led a series of targeted focus groups. Education Forward DC engaged 60 LEA leaders via survey and 57 LEA leaders across eight different focus groups. Respondents indicated a strong need for increased guidance from public health professionals, supports for social-emotional well-being, flexibilities by city agencies, as well as continued citywide coordination and conversation, and unique considerations for adult charter schools.

Health Community

Since the Mayor's first emergency declaration in February establishing the COVID-19 Task Force, the city has worked closely with epidemiologists and experts in the medical community to ensure our planning and actions were guided by the most sound research available locally, nationally and internationally. Members of this committee have been in regular communication with DC Health, specifically Dr. Ankoor Shah and Dr. Preetha Iyengar. They have provided extensive review of the recommendations, guidance for reopening, and all elements of this report from the beginning.

The foundation of this report was built using the guidance put forth by the public health professionals at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health who authored *Public Health Principles for a Phased Reopening During COVID-19: Guidance for Governors*. The committee relied heavily on this piece of critical research that provided in-depth assessments of the risk surrounding potential transmission during a reopening scenario.

Other notable research documents include the Center for Disease Control's *Draft Expanded Guidance for Childcare and Schools* and the Minnesota Department of Health's *MDH Guidance for Social Distancing in Schools*.

Teachers & Staff

Washington, DC, is home to some of the best educators in the world. They have demonstrated agility, compassion, dedication and fortitude throughout the pandemic. Our teachers have pivoted to delivering instruction online and finding numerous ways to engage with students and families, day in and out. They are on the front lines with our families and making daily adjustments to meet the academic, social and emotional learning (SEL), and basic needs of our community. Their perspective has been invaluable for the recommendations featured in this

report. Specifically, we want to note the extensive feedback we received from the Washington Teachers' Union (WTU), groups of teachers (including parents at several local focus groups) and EmpowerED's thoughtful report *An Education Recovery Plan for Washington DC* which listed recommendations to provide a safe and more equitable school system during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The WTU put forth a comprehensive set of recommendations collected from direct conversations with their members. The feedback emphasized the safety and health of students, teachers and staff; equitable access to technology for distance learning; and the importance of the principles of transparency and community engagement. The overarching themes were broken down into a color-coded phased approach. The five phases outlined recommendations at each level of increasing student in-person attendance in a reopening scenario. Over 100 school-based staff and parents representing Cardozo Education Campus, Hendley Elementary School, Ron Brown College Preparatory High School, Anacostia High School, and Columbia Heights Education Campus participated in focus groups and listening campaigns in early May. Participants reflected on the health, school, and transportation conditions that would support a phased reopening of schools; which students should be brought back first; what communication, resources and supports will be helpful for students, families, and teachers; as well as opportunities for increased coordination. In addition, the school-based task forces at Ron Brown College Preparatory High School and Anacostia High School shared their preliminary top priorities for the committee's consideration which included safe transportation to and from school during each phase; robust training series for health safety, distance learning, and wellness training geared toward all stakeholders; sufficient tech devices, coaching and professional development; and IT support for teachers and students.

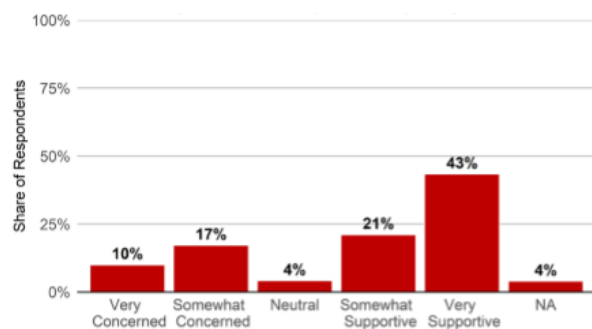
Please refer to the Childcare and Higher Education sections for engagement with those specific communities.

PUBLIC SURVEY INPUT

Mayor Bowser launched an online public survey from April 29 to May 8, 2020 to collect feedback for ReOpen DC from District residents, workers and employers. The survey asked residents to share their feedback about reopening, as well as any big ideas, feedback or concerns. The survey generated 14,465 responses from residents in all eight wards, as well as Maryland, Virginia and other jurisdictions. District residents comprised 84% of respondents and 52% of respondents work in the District. Respondents could select both options if applicable.

Respondents were asked how they felt about a phased reopening once public health experts say it is safe to do so. Nearly two-thirds of respondents were either somewhat supportive or very supportive of a phased reopening in the District. This feedback played a critical role in the opening plan outlined in this report.

8. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT A PHASED REOPENING, ONCE PUBLIC HEALTH EXPERTS SAY WE ARE SAFE TO DO SO?



ANSWER	# OF RESPONDENTS	SHARE OF RESPONDENTS
Very Concerned	1,451	10%
Somewhat Concerned	2,491	17%
Neutral	608	4%
Somewhat Supportive	3,054	21%
Very Supportive	6,283	43%
NA	578	4%

Respondents were also asked to fill out a separate survey if they wanted to provide committee-specific feedback or recommendations. The ReOpen DC Education and Childcare Committee survey received 320 responses. The results demonstrated four general themes: 1) the need for childcare when businesses and other sectors reopen and the best ways to keep children safe in those environments; 2) closing the digital divide; 3) protecting students and staff who are most vulnerable; and 4) transportation to and from school.

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The committee engaged partners on the DC Council to inform this work. Councilmember David Grosso attended two committee meetings and presented to the full committee on May 1, 2020, sharing observations he had collected from his ongoing discussions and engagement with constituents and community members. The councilmember's input for the committee's consideration included the need for flexibility and additional partnerships and the need for more mental health services in schools, particularly a needs assessment at the beginning of the school year.

EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR REOPENING

Mayor Bowser has identified equity as a core pillar of the plan for DC to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic stronger than before. This equity imperative drove the committee to focus on ensuring safety and access for all, with a special emphasis on meeting the health and educational needs of each child and student, regardless of circumstances. In particular, the committee paid special attention to our most vulnerable students, including special populations, students from traditionally underserved communities, and those most at risk of losing out, disconnecting or falling further behind due to the closure of school buildings. In focusing on parental choice, universal internet access, and health supports, the committee has sought to mitigate the risks of exacerbating inequities due to the pandemic.

Importantly, a core position the committee has taken on equity requires all schools and other institutions to offer high-quality learning at home for all students, especially vulnerable students. While it may be possible to serve some number of disadvantaged students in person, and work in person to mitigate the harm of the pandemic, the system's equity imperative requires remote learning to be strong for all.

The committee recognizes that there have been disproportionate rates of infection and morbidity among African Americans and economically -disadvantaged communities. Wards 4 and 5 have the highest number of positive cases by Ward (20% and 16%, respectively), while 21% of the total lives lost were residents from Ward 8.⁵ Additional trauma supports may be necessary to support these populations, particularly those who have long suffered from additional health disparities driven by systemic racism.

STUDENTS

The committee is focused on recommendations that welcome students back for in-person learning as soon as core health conditions are met at a city -level and school-based dashboard criteria are in place. At the same time, in response to feedback from families who have expressed concerns about disproportionate health risks and fear of travel, the committee recommends that schools extend the option to families for students to continue learning at home. Under all circumstances, schools are required to provide rigorous and engaging instruction and to remain connected to students so that all students have access to educational opportunities. Similarly, student access to ongoing supports for their social-and-emotional well-being, including mental health supports, is considered central to any equitable reopening. Participants in student focus groups discussed the importance of consistent wellness check-ins and the need for safe spaces to process how they are feeling and what they are hearing.⁶

Additionally, the city can consider how to provide supports to communities locally to address issues of critical importance to students, including social connectivity, mental health, meaningful ways to engage virtually, accessing college and career opportunities, and ongoing access to meal pick-ups.

TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF

⁵ Mayor Muriel Bowser's Coronavirus Website. 2020. "Coronavirus Data." (as of May 9).
<https://coronavirus.dc.gov/page/coronavirus-data>.

⁶ DME Focus Groups. 2020. Consisted of six focus group discussions with 57 students conducted in April and May 2020.

Through a lens of equity, providing a combination of in-person learning and remote learning for students who are unable to attend school may also provide an opportunity for vulnerable teachers and staff to mitigate health risks.⁷

LEAs can consider how to provide teachers professional development and guidance on creating learning spaces that adhere to COVID-19 protocols, and instruction and lesson planning for their specialized populations. In surveys and focus groups, teachers and staff expressed a desire for robust training on health and safety measures, virtual and blended learning, and wellness.⁸ The post-COVID-19 landscape will have an impact on the provision of instruction and services. The city can consider how to ensure equitable, reliable, and cost-effective access to appropriate health and safety equipment including cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE), which is defined in an educational context to include non-medical masks and gloves. The District can also consider a transportation subsidy for a cab taxi or Uber-like service to ensure teacher safety in the event of a resurgence of COVID-19.

FAMILIES

To ensure equitable support and access to educational opportunities for families, the city can consider supports available within local communities (e.g., Mayor Bowser’s Family Success Centers) to prevent additional health risks to families. Allowing families to continue learning from home can also alleviate family concerns regarding safe transportation to and from school, access to PPE, and concerns around the enforcement of social distancing rules and adequate cleaning. The committee also recommends that LEAs consider how to ensure that the provision of school-based mental health supports will be virtually accessible. However, distance learning is not appropriate for all students – 59% of parents identified “[m]anaging homeschooling of my children” as a top challenge during this time⁹ and families surveyed by DCPS listed “parent doesn’t have time” and “lack of motivation” as the two top challenges of learning at home.¹⁰ Schools can focus on building strong relationships with families and communicating frequently, so that families understand the health and safety systems in place and are more inclined to

⁷ UNICEF. 2020 “Framework for Reopening Schools. <https://www.unicef.org/media/68366/file/Framework-for-reopening-schools-2020.pdf>.

⁸ School-led Focus Groups. 2020. Over 100 school-based staff and parents representing Cardozo Education Campus, Hendley Elementary School, Ron Brown College Preparatory High School, Anacostia High School, and Columbia Heights Education Campus participated in focus groups conducted in early May.

⁹ Parents Amplifying Voices in Education. 2020. “Coronavirus Parent Impact Survey Results.” https://www.dropbox.com/s/ne8w7hbyqs6e2wp/COVID-19%20Parent%20Impact%20Survey%20Results_FINAL2.pdf?dl=0&utm_source=PAVE+Post+Newsletter&utm_campaign=bd9d989b5e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_05_10_08_35_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_9e3f65df2d-bd9d989b5e-102283499.

¹⁰ DCPS Learning at Home Survey. 2020. Nearly 4,400 families participated in the survey conducted between the end of April through early May.

participate in in-person learning when schools reopen. For both students in classrooms and students participating in learning at home, schools can consider new ways to partner closely with families, particularly in support of students at risk of academic failure and non-promotion to the next grade level.

The committee recommends that educational institutions leverage all community resources, including community partners and nonprofits, to support students' and families' overall well-being. In focus groups and surveys, students expressed a need for caregivers and adults, many of whom may be struggling with increased stress and feelings of being overwhelmed, to be flexible, patient, and compassionate with them as they navigate new learning platforms, expectations, and schedules. Schools can identify current partners in the education space with expertise in working with families, such as Kindred, the Flamboyant Foundation, and PAVE, and determine how to maximize their expertise, in particular those focused on relationship building, truancy reduction, and disengagement.^{11,12}

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

As the District plans for a phased reopening, the committee has focused on implementing an equitable approach to serving students, families, and educators. In order to ensure a continuity of equity, the District can focus future planning on our vulnerable populations including, but not limited to, youth in foster care and the justice system, English Learners, undocumented students, and students with disabilities.

There is concern that students in vulnerable populations may have experienced significant learning and service provision loss during remote learning. Given the specialized nature of the services these student populations require, the city can ensure that they receive clear and early communications about education planning and supports. The city can also explore clear, enumerated, and accessible pathways to the necessary and appropriate services. Assurances that students and families from vulnerable populations have the technological support necessary to participate in virtual instruction and a robust educational experience is also a necessity when providing equitable access to learning.

Students with disabilities face significant challenges as schools have shifted to online learning as a result of the pandemic, including, but not limited to, financial and food insecurities, reduced availability of mental health and behavioral support services, exposure to trauma, reduced exposure to their non-disabled peers, and loss of educational benefit. The U.S. Department of

¹¹ DME Focus Groups. 2020. Consisted of six focus group discussions with 57 students conducted in April and May 2020.

¹² Access Youth Survey. 2020. Preliminary survey results of over 400 students from Anacostia High School, Ballou High School, and Eastern High School students conducted between March and May 2020.

Education (ED) has made it clear that LEAs offering distance learning must make the instruction accessible to students with disabilities.^{13,14} The committee and the District are committed to utilizing this opportunity to continue working toward closing the achievement gap for students with disabilities by building leader and educator mindset and capacity to promote students with disabilities' engagement in a distance learning environment.

As LEAs adapt to a future where a blend of online and in-person learning is utilized, they can deepen their partnerships with the families of students with disabilities by ensuring the online learning system can effectively support the LEA's different learning and teaching needs, including the ability to provide differentiated instruction as well as one-on-one support for students who need it. Regardless of where the learning is happening, supports identified on a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) must be provided if the LEA is operating.

English Learner (EL) students and their families should be able to access and engage with the instructional content provided by their schools, be it online or paper materials and activities. As schools strive to do this, they often face a challenge in supporting multilingual families to ensure their students can access materials remotely and use them to advance both language and academic development. Surveys of EL families have revealed challenges and concerns about employment, health, and being able to understand and access materials and communications from school. Schools can explore additional resources to support EL students and families in understanding what they need to do when learning from home, including videos and on-demand translations.

Opportunity Youth, those who have been disengaged from traditional school pathways, are another vulnerable student population who will require in-person supports and services to mitigate challenges that have been exacerbated as a result of COVID-19. Many stakeholders expressed a desire for the city to focus particular attention and support on these young people

¹³ U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. 2020. "Supplemental Fact Sheet Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Schools While Serving Children with Disabilities."
https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/frontpage/faq/rr/policyguidance/Supple%20Fact%20Sheet%203.21.20%20FINAL.pdf?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term.

¹⁴ USDE guidance provides, "School districts must provide a [FAPE] consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those individuals providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to these students. In this unique and ever-changing environment, OCR, and OSERS recognize that these exceptional circumstances may affect how all educational and related services and supports are provided, and the [U.S. Department of Education] will offer flexibility where possible. However, school districts must remember that the provision of FAPE may include, as appropriate, special education and related services provided through distance instruction provided virtually, online, or telephonically. Where technology itself imposes a barrier to access or where educational materials simply are not available in an accessible format, educators may still meet their legal obligations by providing children with disabilities equally effective alternate access to the curriculum or services provided to other students."

who faced considerable challenges prior to the COVID-19 crisis.¹⁵ Social distancing and rules around congregating have left these young people without the supports and services necessary for them to either return to school or participate in additional educational or employment opportunities. Community-based organizations (CBO) and city agencies that provide services to these young people have been unable to utilize traditional ways of contacting them. The provision of reliable and cost-effective PPE is essential to the successful engagement of this vulnerable population and is the first step in helping them reconnect to needed supports. Future planning must also take into consideration firm employment opportunities to family-sustaining careers and easily accessible pathways to educational, certification, and/or training opportunities.

Students in the Care of DC, who are involved with the child welfare and justice systems in the District, face unique challenges that require targeted educational and vocational supports over the summer and as schools reopen. In addressing their unique needs, the city should pay special attention to the needs of students, their families, and caregivers. The committee recommends that the city ensures that students who are being released from correctional and residential facilities and their families receive timely and clear instructions and support to enroll in school after release. Students in foster care or who are justice involved and under community supervision can be best supported through additional educational resources and supports that include school supplies, technology access, and tutoring services. Students and their families should have access to mental health services that are offered over the phone, virtually, or in person that are streamlined and easy to access. Finally, the committee recommends that lines of communication between the schools, students, families, and caregivers are clear so that they are receiving timely updates regarding the status of educational programming. This is especially important for families and caregivers of students who are incarcerated.

EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

As higher education students return to school, there are several issues of equity to consider. Students, faculty and staff may face transportation challenges if they depend on public transportation to get to campus. Lower-income populations may not have options outside of public transportation and may be disproportionately impacted. Given the uncertainty of reliable service and the fear of potential exposure, students may be forced to drop out of school and

¹⁵ School-led Focus Groups. 2020. Over 100 school-based staff and parents representing Cardozo Education Campus, Hendley Elementary School, Ron Brown College Preparatory High School, Anacostia High School, and Columbia Heights Education Campus participated in focus groups conducted in early May.

faculty and staff may face unemployment. Similarly, low-income populations are disproportionately affected by the digital divide. Accommodations will need to be made to ensure that these students have access to a digital device and internet access if they are to engage in online learning.

Figure 2. Equity Considerations for Specific Populations

Population	Equity Considerations
Students (in-person and remote learners)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to technology and the internet, including tech support • Ongoing outreach to remain in touch and ensure progress • Community-based supports for health and mental health, including telehealth • Safe travel to and from school • Safe school environments, including provision of PPE, etc.
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPE, hand sanitizer, and classroom set up to enforce social distancing • Professional development aligned to remote learning and the new safety guidelines needed to implement social distancing effectively • Safe travel to and from school • Dispensation for teachers who cannot be in person in schools
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on health risks and creating a school environment to lessen health risks • Safe travel to and from school, provision of PPE, etc.
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe travel for their students to and from schools • Training and support to help caregivers support their students' technology needs • Access to necessary health and mental health supports, including telehealth • Community-based support for other needs
Vulnerable Populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplemental academic support • Meaningful enrichment and career pathway/employment opportunities • Mental health services for youth and their families • Streamlined communications for caregivers that are translated for families for whom English is not their

	<p>primary language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Technology and internet access• Safe travel to and from school including provision of PPE, etc.
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PK-12 SECTOR

Public education in Washington, DC is based on a core system of high-quality public “schools of right” in every neighborhood, complemented by high-quality public schools of choice. The District’s Pre-K through 12 public school system includes 63 LEAs representing nearly 250 individual schools that serve nearly 100,000 children. DCPS is the LEA that manages neighborhood by-right schools along with a number of schools of choice. The 62 public charter LEAs are citywide schools. In School Year 2019-2020, 94,522 students attended public school, of which 54% attended DCPS schools and 46% attended public charter schools.

Composed of students, families, teachers, administrators, staff, and neighbors, each of these school communities is unique. Due to the District’s robust system of education options, individual families may be represented at multiple schools and LEAs. While each community serves unique students and families, the city’s schools are united by a common commitment to providing a high-quality education to DC youth.

PK-12 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The committee’s comprehensive engagement included students, parents and families, community members, teachers, school and LEA leaders, and other experts. The committee received an extraordinary outpouring of insights, ideas, and concerns through interviews, discussions, focus groups, and surveys. Many of our inputs were solicited by committee members; an equal number were not, but were volunteered by passionate, engaged members of our collective community. (For a full list of engagement inputs, please see the Resources section.)

PK-12 OPPORTUNITIES AND CORE RECOMMENDATIONS

In this moment of extraordinary challenges, our city has an opportunity to rethink how we take a more equitable, rigorous, and holistic approach to schooling than ever before. As we examine our education system, opportunities abound – opportunities to engage more fully with our families and communities, and with our teachers and school leaders; to develop and deliver solutions; opportunities to coordinate and plan together across our 63 LEAs; opportunities to promote equitable access to learning and learning experiences; opportunities to think anew about the fundamentals of pedagogy and of school; and opportunities to spark innovation and rapidly implement the best of our ideas.

Specifically, our committee has identified the following ten opportunities and core recommendations for consideration.

Schools have the opportunity to implement a slow start to reopening (i.e., an “orange” phase), rather than reopen all-at-once, to strengthen their necessary new health operations and to work in person with some students. Such a slow start could occur over the summer, conditions permitting, in advance of the new school year.

A slow ramp-up period can provide an opportunity for schools to evolve their practices to meet the needs of students and families, and the needs of teachers and staff, while ensuring stringent safety protocols. By starting with a smaller cohort, schools can provide more targeted support and better meet rapidly changing student needs. In addition, it provides an opportunity to prioritize specific groups of students who might most benefit from in-person instruction: for example, students in transition grades who are new to the school and most need to establish a sense of community or students whose families need to return to work in person.

In addition, the city can consider a scheduled one-to-two week “pause” to in-person learning following this early, transitional phase, if DC Health deems this an important mitigation strategy.

Once schools are open to all students (i.e., a “yellow” phase), all schools have an opportunity to remain “blended” instructionally, so that students receive high-quality instruction both in the classroom and at home.

As schools reopen for the new school year, educators will again provide rigorous, engaging classroom instruction to students across the District. At the same time, the committee recognizes that the transition to physical, in-person schooling will be gradual, and that schools will continue to serve a large number of students virtually, whether that is students who are unable to attend due to health restrictions or students who participate on a rotating schedule to maximize social distancing.

Considering both the strict social distancing guidelines and the social challenges of a return to buildings, the committee has identified two potential models for the city to consider as it plans: schools which are able to provide in-person instruction for 100% of the students who want it or those targeted populations who schools prioritize for in-person learning (such as young children or children of caregivers who need to return to work in person) and offer virtual for the rest; and schools that can accommodate only a percentage of those students who have selected in-person learning, requiring a differentiated schedule to meet the full demand. Importantly, this means all LEAs will need to provide an entirely virtual school experience for students that require or want it.

Schools will therefore need to develop and sustain strong virtual learning capabilities. This will be especially true if the entire city or individual campuses need to pause in-person instruction due to citywide or local outbreaks.

Given this “blended” imperative, the city has a remarkable opportunity to support families and students learning at home in new ways.

Given our expectation that most or all students will continue remote learning at least on a part-time basis for some or all of the next school year, the city can provide new ways of supporting students learning at home, especially as some parents and caregivers must return to work in person.

In particular, the success of the dual pathway for learning across most schools is connected to universal internet access, presenting the city with a compelling opportunity to resolve the so-called “digital divide.”

In addition, for students who are full-time remote learning as well as those who are on a split schedule (e.g., A days and B days), all sectors of the city, including government and the private sector, can work together to ensure that all students have the access to safe learning spaces, meals, and support they need to succeed in school. For example, government and employers could identify space availability for online learning; or the city and/or LEAs could provide tutors; or the city could provide safe home-study-group guidelines. This could also mean that the city considers new ways to support parents and families as they continue to guide and promote their children’s learning in and out of the school building through such vehicles as the DCPS virtual Parent University.

The committee further recommends that the city and LEAs consider opportunities to promote the growth, development, and learning of young people in new ways. It is critical, the committee believes, to help students “learn to learn” remotely, including support for time management and persistence, and other self-management tools. Additionally, schools can encourage older students to support younger ones (e.g., as virtual tutors) as a way to promote learning and development among older students.

In our next phases, the city has an opportunity to reinforce that schooling is an expectation and a requirement for all students, whether families choose to participate in person or virtually at home.

When schools reopen, the committee recommends that schools focus on ensuring that families and students are safe and feel safe, in order to maximize the number of families choose to attend school in person. However, as schools reopen, the committee recognizes that some families will be concerned about returning to school, and others, including vulnerable populations and those without safe transportation, will be unable to do so. When schools reopen, the committee recommends offering families the choice to continue learning at home if they believe that is in the best interest of their student. This recommendation is based on our

shared commitment to valuing each family's unique circumstances and not putting students with greater health needs at risk, and reflects feedback from numerous stakeholders engaged for this report.¹⁶

Alongside having parental choice in this way, the committee strongly recommends reinforcing that school is mandatory, and that all students must attend either in person or virtually.

As a city and an education system, we have a big opportunity to address disparities across our vulnerable student populations.

As schools consider what students might most benefit from in-person instruction, and also how to strengthen delivery of an effective blend of in-person and virtual instruction, the committee recommends that schools focus on student groups who are most likely to fall behind their peers academically as well as those most at risk of losing out, disconnecting or falling further behind due to the closure of school buildings. This includes but is not limited to English Learners, students who receive special education services, youth in foster care and the justice system, and students in traditionally underserved communities. The committee strongly encourages all LEAs to strengthen their virtual learning to meet the unique needs of the city's most vulnerable student groups, including those who face significant challenges learning at home.

Schools have an opportunity to holistically meet the needs of their students through new and significant health capacity and expanded mental health supports.

The impact of COVID-19 has not only threatened the health and safety of many, but has also taken an immense toll on the mental health and well-being of students, families and staff. The committee recommends that schools focus on trauma-responsive engagement, structures, practices, and supports for all students as they adjust to a new model of learning and navigate the impact of anxiety, isolation, and loss related to the pandemic. All staff, including school administrators and teachers, nurses and clinicians, will play a role in supporting student health and safety. Schools can consider both guidance from expert health workers as well as all-staff training to effectively implement social-distancing and other health protocols.

In addition, extra capacity might be required to support the social-emotional and mental health needs of students as they return to schools. This capacity could take the form of school-based personnel or supportive partner organizations, or new kinds of training and development for instructional staff.

¹⁶ School-led Focus Groups. 2020. Over 100 school-based staff and parents representing Cardozo Education Campus, Hendley Elementary School, Ron Brown College Preparatory High School, Anacostia High School, and Columbia Heights Education Campus participated in focus groups conducted in early May.

To take full advantage of this opportunity to ensure safe schools, the committee recommends the city consider how to support all schools in accessing reliable, cost-effective health and safety resources, including additional cleaning supplies and PPE.

The city also has an opportunity to honor and strengthen our front-line educators through expansive training and development.

As families have had to shepherd and support their students' learning in new ways at home, so teachers have been asked to pivot abruptly into entirely new ways of teaching. The city now has a considerable opportunity over the summer and into the new school year to bolster teacher skills and expertise and provide ongoing development opportunities to strengthen the delivery of remote instruction everywhere for every student.

Specifically, the city has an opportunity to provide teachers with the time and space to learn, to make plans, and to work together on generating new solutions to new challenges. The city also has an opportunity to provide forums for teachers from across the city to share their own expertise with colleagues.

When coordinating this ongoing learning and development, LEAs and the city can consider that members of the teacher workforce may also face remote work constraints as some are unable to participate in person if they are part of a vulnerable population, struggle with childcare, or have other unique circumstances.¹⁷

There is an opportunity to provide all schools and LEAs with new flexibilities, in order to behave much more nimbly to meet evolving school and community needs.

Given these unexpected changes to the fundamentals of school, LEAs can consider providing schools new budget flexibilities (e.g., the ability to change their budget allocations). School staffing, in particular, will be a complex jigsaw puzzle. To solve it, schools can consider how to partner with teachers to work more flexibly, as educators might not be able to retain the same small cohorts, might need to work across grade levels or subjects, and might need to collaborate much more actively within schools in new ways; similarly, schools can consider providing teachers with additional flexibilities to manage more complex schedules and student needs. Due to evolving health needs, the committee recommends that schools adopt a flexible approach so that they are able to pause the in-person component of their program at any time and transition agilely to 100% remote learning if required by public health officials. Also, as schools and students face increasingly complex needs, schools can consider how to flexibly engage with nonprofits and the private sector for direct supports.

¹⁷ UNICEF. 2020 "Framework for Reopening Schools. <https://www.unicef.org/media/68366/file/Framework-for-reopening-schools-2020.pdf>..

Schools and other partners in the education ecosystem have an exciting opportunity to innovate and learn together at a much more rapid pace.

As a system, the city can consider how to become better and faster at identifying, developing, sharing, and implementing the best solutions throughout DC schools. As one example, the city can consider establishing a “remote learning center of excellence” for all DC LEAs to share best practices and ensure that virtual learning opportunities meet the city’s bar of excellence. Separately, the city has a chance now to build strong new partnerships across our public, nonprofit, and private sectors in service to students and families. The private sector and philanthropy can be key partners in sparking innovation through grants and other means, pushing the city to develop new solutions to new challenges. Schools can also strengthen and expand partnerships with nonprofits and community organizations already on the front lines who have creatively pivoted their services in response to COVID-19.

Schools, LEAs, and the city have opportunities to coordinate in significant new ways.

To support the transition back to school for families with students across the city, all schools can be encouraged to support the development of, and align with, citywide decisions to the maximum extent possible. In recent surveys and focus groups, LEA leaders expressed a desire for continued coordination, conversation, and engagement heading into next school year. School-based staff and school task forces from Anacostia High School also suggested a need for coordination with surrounding jurisdictions regarding staged reopening and health and safety.^{18,19} All schools across the city can consider adopting the same schedule (e.g., of A and B days, or A and B weeks), along with employers in the District and, ideally, with Maryland and Virginia. In a similar way, LEAs can consider coordinating on their school-year schedules, with common start and end dates and the inclusion of a “pause” of in-person learning to assess health effects (if deemed essential by DC Health). As the city develops coordinated schedule options, the committee believes that input from parents, educators, school leaders, and the business community will be critical to developing the best models. The city can consider developing and implementing a District-wide survey to capture feedback on a set of schedule options to ensure the city is considering the most critical factors before finalizing a plan.

Beyond scheduling, LEAs can collaborate on virtual schooling, for example through teacher-sharing (e.g., having one virtual AP Chemistry teacher across multiple LEAs). LEAs can also consider coordination on fall “no stakes” formative assessments to build a stronger collective understanding of where our students’ learning stands so that families and educators can

¹⁸ Education Forward DC LEA Leader Survey. 2020. 60 LEA leaders participated via an online survey and 57 LEA leaders participated in eight different focus groups conducted in late April/early May 2020.

¹⁹ School-led Focus Groups. 2020. Over 100 school-based staff and parents representing Cardozo Education Campus, Hendley Elementary School, Ron Brown College Preparatory High School, Anacostia High School, and Columbia Heights Education Campus participated in focus groups conducted in early May.

monitor and use the results to tailor instruction. The city can also lead coordination with WMATA on transportation, so that students can safely commute to and from school.

PK-12 LESSONS LEARNED DURING STAY-AT-HOME

Through our deliberations and extensive stakeholder outreach, the committee has identified six important lessons from our city's experiences thus far.

DC's teachers and educators are resilient, creative, and committed; DC does indeed have the best educators in the country, and they are up for this challenge. At the same time, the education sector does now understand many of the complexities and needs of learning at home, and our educators require time and development to prepare for additional stretches of remote instruction. Teachers have shown tremendous resilience and commitment during this time, but also need continued support, flexibilities, and training to find ongoing success and to navigate their own challenges. Traditional classroom teaching cannot simply be replicated as distance learning and requires adequate professional development and content preparation. Evidence shows that after an emergency situation like Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, a city can lose many experienced educators who retire early, and disproportionately lose teachers of color, so the committee recommends that schools focus on making meaningful investments in teacher development and that decisions and plans are made in partnership with educators on the front lines.²⁰

The city must redouble its efforts to gain and retain connections with all students. A small percentage of students have been fully disconnected from learning at home for a number of reasons. The committee recommends the city consider how to adopt creative and intentional strategies to stay connected with students and families beyond the classroom.

A large proportion of our students and families struggle with social and emotional challenges and require extended supports. April 2020 results from a survey of high school students by the Young Women's Project suggest that youth are experiencing increased levels of stress, anxiety, loneliness, and depression.²¹ The committee recommends that the city's approach prioritizes the social-emotional and mental health needs of all students and explores how to provide trauma-informed care effectively both in person and when students are not in the building. The city can also expand the connections between services for students and families to ensure schools are places where families can access mental health assistance.

Coordinated planning and resource-sharing among DCPS and public charter LEAs is beneficial and is desired by a vast majority of LEAs. The committee applauds the strong collaboration

²⁰ EmpowerED. 2020. "An Education Recovery Plan Created by DC Teachers."

<https://www.weareempowered.org/recovery.html>

²¹ Young Women's Project. 2020. "Survey and Recommendations on Student Mental Health-Wellness Needs for Open DC."

and cooperation across sectors and schools, and among agencies, that has grown up as a result of the pandemic. All schools are facing a rapidly evolving landscape and the committee believes that the city may benefit from ongoing, collaborative shared learning and best practices, so that LEAs can continue to adapt quickly and efficiently.

A subset of students has benefited from the independence and self-pacing provided through virtual learning. Schools can consider how to adapt their pedagogy to best support students who have thrived in the virtual learning atmosphere to continue to meet their learning style needs.

PK-12 CHALLENGES

Internet Access

This transition from in-person learning to learning at home has relied primarily on technology. Schools face the challenges of ensuring that they have enough devices for students, sometimes excluding younger elementary grades, as well as managing inevitable replacement and repair needs. Schools also have had to distribute the devices in a safe and secure manner – both to maintain social distancing standards and to ensure students’ physical safety as they return home with the new devices. The next challenge is ensuring that students have access to fast, reliable internet. Over 80% of respondents identified at-home connectivity as a top-five issue for their LEA in a recent survey of LEA leaders.²² The digital divide is a long-recognized inequity and the health crisis has amplified the need for solutions. Finally, though just as imperative, once they have access to devices and internet, some students and families need technical assistance in order to navigate new technology and virtual learning platforms.

Special Needs Student Services

As schools shifted to online learning as a result of the pandemic, students with disabilities faced challenges including, but not limited to, financial and food insecurities, reduced availability of mental health and behavioral support services, exposure to trauma, reduced exposure to their non-disabled peers, and loss of educational benefit. As LEAs adapt to a future where a blend of online and in-person learning is utilized, the committee recommends they consider how to deepen their partnerships with the families of students with disabilities. LEAs and families can work together to identify and clearly communicate barriers to service delivery; develop and implement flexible, creative, student-specific approaches to delivering special education services that are consistent with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirements; and support data-informed, individualized services by ensuring that students are both ready and available for ongoing assessment and service.

²² Education Forward DC LEA Leader Survey. 2020. 60 LEA leaders participated via an online survey and 57 LEA leaders participated in eight different focus groups conducted in late April/early May 2020.

Liabilities

There are liabilities that can be considered in reopening schools before a vaccine is available, as well as the expectations and procedures should a student, teacher, or staff member fall ill with COVID-19. LEA leaders expressed a desire for legal advice in applying public health guidance to decisions on limiting liability and needed insurance levels.²³ The committee recommends that schools consider how to manage students, teachers, and staff who cannot return to school due to illness, their status as part of a high-risk population, or exposure and the need to self-quarantine.

PK-12 REOPENING GUIDANCE

Phasing

The recommendations about how to reopen schools and which students to bring back in each phase are based on two core principles: keeping public health and the safety of students, staff, and families at the forefront; and reopening schools in a way that provides all students equitable access to learning experiences and provides stability to students and families. These core principles were shaped by extensive feedback with school-based staff, LEA leaders, and families who identified ensuring safe environments from a physical health and mental health standpoint as a top concern.²⁴

Phase 1: Orange (potentially Summer 2020) Phase

In the first phase of opening, the committee recommends that schools open to serve only a small number of students in person. This prioritized group of students might consist of students in transitional grades (typically 3rd, 6th, and 9th grades) and the children of workers that must return to work. This prioritization is based on the need for students in transitional grades to establish a sense of community as they enter a new grade band as well as adapt to new school expectations at the elementary, middle, or high school level. In addition, there is a need for children of healthcare and emergency workers, educators, as well as any workers that must return to work as telework orders are lifted to return to school.

These students might attend school on a modified schedule before the start of the traditional school year in a select number of schools. While traveling to school, entering the building, and attending class, strict social distancing measures will need to be in place. Schools will also receive enhanced cleanings, and students and staff will engage in proper hygiene mitigation measures aligned to guidance from DC Health. See Figure 4a for additional details.

²³ Education Forward DC LEA Leader Survey. 2020. 60 LEA leaders participated via an online survey and 57 LEA leaders participated in eight different focus groups conducted in late April/early May 2020.

²⁴ School-led Focus Groups. 2020. Over 100 school-based staff and parents representing Cardozo Education Campus, Hendley Elementary School, Ron Brown College Preparatory High School, Anacostia High School, and Columbia Heights Education Campus participated in focus groups conducted in early May.

Phase 2: Yellow (potentially Fall 2020) Phase

The yellow phase marks the start of the new academic school year for all students and will follow the Orange (Summer 2020) phase. Schools will open to all students and schooling will be an expectation and a requirement for all families. However, students and their families may choose an at-home learning pathway if that meets their preferred need. Due to social distancing measures and space limitations in schools, most schools will only be able to accommodate 30-50% of their enrolled student population, assuming that large spaces such as gymnasiums, cafeterias, and libraries can be repurposed. Students participating in the in-person pathway during this phase will attend on an adapted schedule. During this phase, schools will continue to implement strict social distancing measures and enhanced cleanings, with some small changes. Most mitigation measures laid out in Figure 4a will still be in place, with a few small modifications or additional measures, which are described in Figure 4b.

Phase 3: Lime Phase

As PK-12 schools will move into Phase 3, some social distancing measures can be relaxed based on guidance from DC Health and the CDC. This will include an increase in the number of individuals that can gather in one place at a time. Sports activities, such as tryouts, practices, and spectator events can resume. During Phase 3, enhanced cleanings will continue.

Figure 3. Proposed Prioritization and Phasing for PK-12 Schools

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
PK-12 Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students in transitional grades and students of workers who must return to work (families can decide to continue learning at home). Select schools. Modified schedule. Strict social distancing measures and enhanced cleanings in place. Expanded health expertise in all schools. Additional health trainings and direct lines of communication 	PK-12 Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students can return to schools (families can still decide on their preferred learning model: in person or learning at home). Coordinated, citywide alternating schedules. Strict social distancing measures and enhanced cleanings remain in place. 	PK-12 Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some social distancing measures relaxed. Some increase in allowable in-school activities, including small gatherings. Enhanced cleaning continues. Some sports activities resume.

between schools and assigned DC Health liaison(s).		
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Guidelines for Reopening²⁵

Schools play an important role in slowing the spread of COVID-19. However, schools are unique in that they have substantial control over how individuals gather and who comes into contact with each other in a space. As schools reopen, school-specific measures can be put into place to reduce the chance of unnecessary close contact between students, teachers, and staff. These steps will reduce possible transmission of COVID-19 while allowing for the continuation of student education in the traditional school building. The guidelines below were developed primarily based on guidance from health experts and officials, including the CDC and DC Health, but also incorporating robust committee input and stakeholder engagement.

Two primary principles shared by health officials with the committee that guide these mitigation guidelines are:

1. Minimize the mixing of cohorts and ensure that groups stick together to reduce the likelihood of expanding community spread.
2. Within groups, maintain six feet of distance between people and cap the number of people gathered together within one classroom space at around 10.

As schools reopen in phases, varying degrees of social distancing will need to be implemented to promote safe environments. Every school setting is different, and the committee recognizes that, after ensuring compliance with mandated health standards, the implementation of other measures and guidelines may look different. In these cases, school leaders can think creatively about how to implement the spirit of the recommended strategy, while adhering to the non-negotiable mandates. Additionally, while these guidelines are written for all PK-12 schools, special implementation considerations will need to be adopted for schools with unique formats and models, including residential campuses or early-childhood schools.

Figure 4a. Proposed Orange (potential Summer 2020) Phase Mitigation and Guidelines for PK-12 Schools

	Mitigation Guidelines (<i>ranked by difficulty of implementation</i>)
Traveling to and from School	<p><i>Limit student interaction on public transportation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the extent possible, students and families should avoid public transportation, particularly during high-volume times. This includes Metrorail, buses, and Circulator. (<i>high</i>) • Maintain at least six feet of distance when traveling. Avoid congregating in large groups at intersections and transit stops. (<i>high</i>) • Encourage the use of face masks based on guidance from DC Health. (<i>medium</i>) <p><i>Cancel or reschedule outside events</i></p>

²⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2020. "Draft Expanded Guidance for Child Care and Schools."

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cancel field trips and other scheduled schoolwide or class outings or convert them to virtual activities. <i>(low)</i> • Cancel sports tryouts, practices, and games. <i>(low)</i> • Eliminate non-essential travel (e.g., conferences) for staff and teachers. <i>(low)</i>
Entering and Exiting School	<p><i>Adjust how students enter school buildings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stagger the times students are scheduled to arrive and are dismissed so students do not enter or exit the school all at once to avoid congregating around doors in large groups. <i>(high)</i> • Conduct health and symptom screenings as students enter each day. <i>(high)</i> • Open additional doors for entry and exit to avoid funneling all students through a single point of entry. Direct students to the door closest to their classroom or homeroom. <i>(medium)</i> • Create clear space delineations for student lines as students enter and exit school as well as within the school space to keep students 6 feet apart where possible (e.g. create and mark line spots in hallways and outdoors). <i>(low)</i>
Classrooms and Hallways	<p><i>Reconfigure school activities to facilitate safe distances</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rearrange desks so that a minimum of six feet is present between desks. In a traditional classroom, this could equate to approximately 8 to 10 students. <i>(high)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ In classrooms where the typical desk set-up does not apply, separate learning spaces so that students are at least six feet apart. <i>(high)</i> ◦ In early education classrooms, place students head to toe during nap times. <i>(medium)</i> • Utilize partitions or dividers per DC Health specifications and review to create more opportunities to maximize space. <i>(high)</i> • Implement one-way pathways in classrooms, using stickers or tape to indicate traffic flow. <i>(medium)</i> • Repurpose large spaces such as gymnasiums, cafeterias, and libraries for student learning. <i>(low)</i> • Cancel large gatherings of students, such as assemblies and indoor physical education classes when six feet of distance is not possible. <i>(low)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ When possible, hold physical education classes outside while maintaining appropriate distance between students. Use visual cues (e.g., use chalk to indicate where a student should stand) to maintain six feet of distance. <i>(low)</i> • Rotate desks, including the teacher's desk, so that they all face one direction. <i>(low)</i> <p><i>Reduce or eliminate transitions between classes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In grades where students traditionally transition between classes, rotate teachers between classrooms, rather than students. <i>(high)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ If students must transition between classes, designate space

	<p>markers in the hallways and allow for extra time between classes. <i>(medium)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the lunchroom must be used, stagger lunchtime into groups of students from the same classroom cohort and disinfect in between. <i>(high)</i> • Eliminate or reduce elective classes to diminish student and teacher movement, or move elective classes online. Reassign elective teachers where appropriate. <i>(medium)</i> • Hold breakfast and lunch periods in student classrooms, with students eating at their desks. <i>(medium)</i>
Limiting Outside Interactions	<p><i>Avoid unnecessary external factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise the process for receiving mail and packages. Only have necessary items delivered and combine orders so fewer deliveries are made. <i>(medium)</i> • Prohibit outside visitors from entering the school unless their presence was requested or if they received permission to enter the school. <i>(medium)</i> • Require teachers to conduct meetings with parents through audio- or videoconferencing. <i>(low)</i>
Maintaining a Healthy Environment	<p><i>Implement schoolwide healthy strategies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the frequency of full school cleaning and disinfecting efforts. <i>(high)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Clean high-contact surfaces (e.g., desks, keyboards, door handles, playground equipment) daily. <i>(high)</i> • Make hand cleaning supplies readily available in classrooms, bathrooms, and offices. Set up sanitizing stations outside of large common spaces including the gymnasium, cafeteria, and entrances/exits. <i>(high)</i> • Prepackage lunches, including silverware, napkins, and seasonings, or serve meals individually plated. <i>(high)</i> • Teachers and staff to wear face masks per guidance from DC Health. <i>(high)</i> • Remove shared supplies. Provide all students with their own materials in designated and labeled bags or bins. <i>(high)</i> • Establish policy that if a household member has a pending COVID-19 test, the student/staff should remain at home until results; if a household member is diagnosed with a positive test the student/staff should remain home until cleared by their medical provider or until 14 days since last exposure. <i>(medium)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Put in place a robust communication plan to alert DC Health to positive or pending cases. Schools are prepared to quickly alert families to changes in schedules or normal operations. <i>(medium)</i> • Designate an area for students, teachers, or staff that exhibit symptoms and keep separate from the area used for routine healthcare. <i>(medium)</i> • Close or restrict common areas such as staff breakrooms. <i>(low)</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase air circulation only where safe and possible and ensure ventilation systems are operating properly. <i>(low)</i> <p><i>Educate students on proper health strategies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students wash or sanitize their hands when both entering and exiting a classroom or between activities. <i>(high)</i> • Enforce a “you touch it, you take it” policy in classrooms and the lunchroom. <i>(medium)</i> • Have teachers reinforce the proper hand-washing techniques and the importance of not touching their face. <i>(low)</i> • Have tissues readily available in classrooms; request that students sneeze into their elbow if tissues are not available. <i>(low)</i> <p><i>Install additional infrastructure to prevent cross-contamination</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install no-touch fixtures where possible: automatic faucets and toilets; touchless foot door openers, touchless trashcans. <i>(high)</i>
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Figure 4b. Proposed Yellow Phase (potential Fall 2020) Mitigation and Guidelines for PK-12 Schools*

	Mitigation Guidelines <i>(ranked by difficulty of implementation)</i>
Traveling to and from School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For students and families that must use public transportation, encourage maintaining a distance of six feet between themselves and others, sitting one person/family unit to a seat, and limiting interaction with others. <i>(high)</i>
Entering and Exiting School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate students, teachers, and staff into cohorts that will attend school on alternating schedules to reduce the number of individuals in the building at any one time. <i>(high)</i>
Classrooms and Hallways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As elective classes are phased in, have elective teachers push into classrooms instead of students transferring rooms. <i>(high)</i> • As larger gatherings are allowed, limit the number of attendees and to only those that can maintain appropriate social distancing. <i>(medium)</i>
Limiting Outside Interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid the use of volunteers unless their presence is necessary and if their contact is limited to a consistent group of students. <i>(medium)</i> • Designate a limited number of spaces for visitors and outside guests (e.g., restrict all meetings to one to two conference rooms; do not allow parents into classrooms). <i>(low)</i> • Develop a strong and detailed visitor log for volunteer and guest entry. Sync this log with the health team to support contact tracing as needed. <i>(low)</i>
Maintaining a Healthy Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide wipes or hand sanitizer near shared supplies. <i>(high)</i> • Encourage full or partial telework for staff that can continue to work from home, unless they are needed elsewhere in the school. <i>(low)</i>

*All mitigations and guidelines from the Orange Phase (potential summer 2020) are still applicable during the Yellow Phase (potential fall 2020) except where modified in Figure 4b.

There is an additional, relevant consideration that the committee has recently learned through our engagement with DC Health experts. As access to new tests for the virus evolve, the

addition of testing to school screening procedures may be considered in the future as testing options and guidance change, which might allow for more accurate screenings of current COVID-19 cases across school populations. While there are many complicating social and other factors to consider in relation to such screening, the committee recommends that the city consider the introduction of future testing as an additional measure to ensure safe and equitable access to ongoing learning opportunities.






Compliance with Guidance

While many of the details of compliance are beyond the scope of this report (for example, what changes can be made to OSSE's compliance regimen related to evolving federal requirements; and what changes can be made to the Public Charter School Board's oversight requirements), the committee favors a careful review of the foundational and ongoing compliance measures that are already a part of the fabric of our system. This review can prioritize ensuring that any current compliance measures do not unduly penalize any students, staff, schools, or LEAs due to the pandemic. Secondly, the committee recommends that the city consider whether any aspects of the new health protocols and requirements at the school level can be required, and audited, in new compliance measures designed to ensure consistent standards and adherence across all schools in the city.

Conditions that Allow for Transition into Next Phases

Meeting the overall health and safety benchmarks outlined by DC Health is the foundation for reopening. DC Health will drive the overall timeline on when schools can move from the current posture of remote learning for all into a space where a physical return to school buildings for in-person learning is safe.

Once the city and educational system receive approval from DC Health, schools then must ensure that they meet the following conditions to transition to the next phase.

These conditions will allow schools to successfully implement the above guidelines:		
	1. Schools have the ability to implement procedures for students to safely enter the building (e.g., perform health checks; open additional doors; enforce social distancing).	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Schools can implement social distancing during the school day (e.g., 6 feet desk spacing; physical dividers; minimized hallway congregation).	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3. Schools have sufficient staff to:	-
	a. Carry out in-person and online learning;	<input type="checkbox"/>
	b. Manage the academic and social-emotional recuperation strategies for students as they return;	<input type="checkbox"/>
	c. Conduct more frequent and enhanced cleaning protocols;	<input type="checkbox"/>
	d. Engage in heightened communications with the DME, DOH, and parents on COVID-related matters, including positive cases or school operational status.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4. Schools have the necessary materials and supplies to implement the prescribed guidelines (e.g., additional cleaning supplies; hand-sanitizer; facemasks).	<input type="checkbox"/>
	5. Schools have determined which students will be attending school in-person and which will be attending online, and the schedule on which they will alternate. Schools have confirmed that all students that will be conducting any learning online have access to a digital device and internet access.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Differentiated Approach to Students and Schools

Given the unique needs of students and school communities, there is no one size fits all approach to the way LEAs operationalize schooling. As the results of the citywide survey on reopening suggest, residents are strongly in favor of a phased approach to reopening and have prioritized personal and family health as their greatest concern. In response to these clear concerns and the opportunities outlined in the earlier portion of this report, the committee recommends that our phased approach to school include differentiated timelines, conditions, and considerations regarding student populations.

With the social distancing and safety measures in place, schools will operate differentially based on the flexibilities needed to meet the unique needs of their student communities, staffing capacity, instructional model, and geographic or community-specific health conditions that might be impacting a particular area. For example, student in-person preferences could look different for an early childhood campus as opposed to a residential charter or boarding school serving middle and high school students. Schools will need to apply the criteria outlined and consider specific family demand and student needs to create a schedule for in-person learning that creates the greatest community stability and instructional opportunity for students.

Finally, the committee also recommends creating a set of clear health-based criteria outlining which students and community populations should not participate in in-person learning. This could include medically fragile youth, students with underlying health conditions, or those residing with vulnerable family members or within communities most adversely affected by COVID-19 at a given time.²⁶

PK-12 PREPARATION AND RESOURCES NEEDED FOR REOPENING

Testing, PPE, and Other Supplies

The education sector must put into place practices recommended by DC Health to reduce possible transmission of COVID-19. LEA leaders, school-based staff, and student focus groups all expressed concern that schools, families, and students have sufficient cleaning and PPE supplies (for schools, "PPE" currently includes only non-medical face masks and gloves).^{27,28} Schools must have the ability and staffing to implement procedures for students to safely enter buildings. Schools must also have the capacity to sustain enhanced cleaning and sanitization protocols and must ensure hand hygiene supplies are readily available throughout the buildings. If regular health checks are required, schools must have adequate supplies of equipment to support the screening process and, if not contactless, train staff to safely take temperatures. These mitigation efforts will require significant investment and procurement of PPE, and in some cases may require resources to retrofit facilities. LEA leaders expressed a desire for support with procurement of hard-to-obtain supplies such as PPE, hand sanitizer, etc.

The city can consider centralizing the procurement and distribution of reliable and cost-effective PPE and cleaning supplies for all public schools – including charters and private early childhood providers – at the citywide level in order to take advantage of economies of scale. There will need to be clear, transparent guidelines to determine the allocation of supplies to schools, and supplies should be in place prior to school opening. In preparation for reopening, the city can consider auditing necessary materials and supply chains for cleaning, disinfecting, and preventing spread of disease for each phase of reentry. Each LEA should ensure adequate supply of air filters at schools and functioning HVAC systems to improve air quality to reduce airborne pathogens. A well-ventilated school building should be a cornerstone for a safe opening. Similarly, the city can determine the desired length of time for which the supply chain

²⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission (Appendix A). <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community-mitigation-strategy.pdf>.

²⁷ Education Forward DC LEA Leader Survey. 2020. 60 LEA leaders participated via an online survey and 57 LEA leaders participated in eight different focus groups conducted in late April/early May 2020.

²⁸ School-led Focus Groups. 2020. Over 100 school-based staff and parents representing Cardozo Education Campus, Hendley Elementary School, Ron Brown College Preparatory High School, Anacostia High School, and Columbia Heights Education Campus participated in focus groups conducted in early May.

is secured at reopening, including the number of weeks' worth of supplies needed for each phase.

LEAs should ensure sufficient supplies and implement facility modifications to make key changes to food service to reduce cross-contamination and limit staff in kitchens. All food items should be fully boxed or individually plated, and no food should be directly touched by students. Schools should enforce "take what you touch" policies and package cutlery and other food-related items in single-serve packages. To meet these goals, LEAs can evaluate whether new food vendors need to be sourced or whether preparation can occur in-house.

All facilities and learning environments need to be evaluated and modified as appropriate to meet social distancing guidelines. LEAs can consider leveraging federal funding to retrofit school facilities for social distancing and to implement physical upgrades such as sanitization stations and hand-washing sinks, touchless doors and bathroom fixtures, and partitions.²⁹ Centralized contracting might be used to conduct third-party audits of each school. To support the analysis of costs, benefits, and risk tolerance, LEAs can share public health guidance with their communities. The city can consider creating common signage for LEAs to reinforce social distancing and hand-washing etiquette.

Transportation

The schools and city can coordinate in significant new ways with WMATA and other regional transit partners to address the evolving transportation needs, safety concerns, and shifting schedules of families and staff in each phase of reopening. Because of the District's robust system of school choice, students frequently enroll in a school that they cannot feasibly walk to, further raising the need for a coordinated transportation response plan.

In School Year 2018-2019, one-third of DC students (30,405) lived within a comfortable walkable distance to school.³⁰ The median commute distance for elementary grade students was 1 mile, 1.6 miles for middle -grade students, and 2.5 miles for high school students.³¹ Nearly 50,000 unique students relied on the Kids Ride Free program to travel on Metrorail and Metrobus to and from school. In addition, more than 3,200 students with disabilities were transported by OSSE to 230 different schools. Many families have students enrolled at multiple schools with different bell times, further complicating travel logistics.

The city can consider coordination among WMATA, transit partners, and LEAs. In this coordination, the city might prioritize aligning the scheduling of bus routes that serve significant

²⁹ McKinsey & Company. 2020. "Safely back to school after coronavirus closures."

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/social-sector/our-insights/safely-back-to-school-after-coronavirus-closures>.

³⁰ Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education. 2019. "Edsight #4: How Many Public School Students in DC Could Walk to Their School?" <https://dme.dc.gov/node/1439981>.

³¹ Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, EdScape Beta 2019. "Trends in Distance to School by Grade Band." <https://edscape.dc.gov/page/enrollment-patterns-trends-distance-school-grade-band>.

numbers of students and prioritizing the reopening of routes and increased service frequency on routes that serve students returning to school. Transportation partners can explore establishing and communicating protocols and expectations for social distancing on public transit. Schools can then reinforce these expectations with students. The city can evaluate adjusting the Kids Ride Free program to account for any enrollment changes as well as the safe and efficient distribution and replacement of Kids Ride Free SmartTrip cards. The city has the opportunity to support teachers and staff commutes and can consider providing a transportation subsidy for a taxi or rideshare service to ensure that educators are able to continue to commute to work.

In coordination led by the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), the city can evaluate the best strategies for supporting pedestrian needs for social distancing while traveling to and from schools. These strategies may include exploring the feasibility of street closures near schools to enhance capacity for social distancing for walkers and bikers; coordinating volunteer efforts to create walking school bus programs; and implementing “one-way” sidewalks or other engineering controls on streets between major transit corridors. The city can also identify and assess the need for modifications to safe passage priority areas and ensure a sufficient crossing guard workforce is in place at each phase. The city can also explore opportunities to provide extra transportation support for vulnerable populations. These strategies can include an analysis of the feasibility of providing dedicated transportation options including buses, shuttles, or ridesharing to schools for vulnerable populations. In the early phases of reopening, schools can work with families to develop personalized transit planning, so that students can safely travel to and from school.

Transportation for Students with Disabilities

The OSSE Division of Student Transportation (DOT) provides safe, reliable and efficient transportation services that positively support learning opportunities for eligible students with disabilities from the District of Columbia. OSSE DOT services approximately 3,400 students who attend 230 schools across the regional area, which includes Maryland and Virginia. Provision of services under a student’s IEP is an obligation under IDEA. OSSE operates more than 500 buses a day with more than 1,000 unionized transportation workers to serve these students, with complex routing and communications systems to ensure timeliness and safety of students and staff.

Due to the complexities of this routing, LEAs must coordinate with OSSE DOT on school calendars and schedules to ensure that the service obligations are being met for students with disabilities. Routing of buses and communicating with families takes time to plan and execute, and LEAs must submit Transportation Request Forms to OSSE for each individual student. Therefore, the committee recommends that deadlines for decisionmaking on alternating in-person versus virtual schedules take this into account.

In addition to recommendations in other sections regarding standardized school schedules, the city can explore the feasibility of standardizing school bell times to allow school bus routes to be tiered by using a school bus team to perform more than one route in the morning and afternoon to transport students that attend the same school during a single route. This approach would allow for social distancing and proper disinfecting between rides and cohorts of students. OSSE can also examine social distancing and cleaning practices overall to protect the health and safety of staff and students. For families who may have concerns about the school bus given social distancing protocols, OSSE can explore expanding parent transportation reimbursement options.

Internet Access

All schools have learning devices in their inventory, but device inventory varies widely across schools and LEAs. In addition, some public charter schools were “1:1” schools before COVID-19, meaning every enrolled student had access to an electronic learning device; DCPS is in year one (of three) of their Empowered Learners Initiative (ELI), as they transition to become a 1:1 district for students in grades 3-12. Even those schools with enough learning devices for their student population now are preparing for the inevitable replacement and repair that occurs in the lifecycle of a device. As schools consider device access, the majority of schools intend to provide 1:1 device access to all students, while others intend to provide access only for some students (typically excluding younger grades).

However, because of the need to continue learning at home, access to technology devices for all students has become a more time-sensitive priority. According to the PAVE Family Survey, 39% of families in Ward 7 and 41% of families in Ward 8 listed access to technology/internet as the most challenging issue they face or a very challenging issue.³²

Beyond ensuring that students have a learning device, the committee recommends that the city ensures that every student has access to the internet. The digital divide is a long-recognized inequity defined as “the gap between people with useful access to digital and information technologies and those with little to no access at all”.³³ According to the latest five-year American Community Survey results, approximately 80% of households in Washington, DC have broadband internet service. The average home broadband adoption rate of Wards 1, 2, 3, 4,

³² Parents Amplifying Voices in Education. 2020. “Coronavirus Parent Impact Survey Results.” https://www.dropbox.com/s/ne8w7hbyqs6e2wp/COVID-19%20Parent%20Impact%20Survey%20Results_FINAL2.pdf?dl=0&utm_source=PAVE+Post+Newsletter&utm_campaign=bd9d989b5e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_05_10_08_35_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_9e3f65df2d-bd9d989b5e-102283499.

³³ Connect.DC - Digital Inclusion Initiative. 2020. “Fact Sheet.” <https://connect.dc.gov/page/fact-sheet>.

and 6 is 87%, and the average rate in Wards 5, 7, and 8 is approximately 66%.³⁴ The recent reliance on learning at home has amplified the need to close the digital divide – if the District does not, the students most in need will fall even further behind.

In order to ensure that all students have access to learning devices and the internet, city agencies, schools, CBOs, and philanthropic leaders have already come together to devise creative solutions.

- DCPS distributed up to 16,000 learning devices and 10,000 T-Mobile hotspots to their students for use during the remainder of School Year 2019-2020 as well as into the summer.
- The DC Equity Fund, established at the Greater Washington Community Foundation in partnership with Education Forward DC and the DC Public Education Fund, granted DCPS and the charter LEAs a total of \$1.04M to help support devices and internet connectivity in early April. The fund continues to fundraise to support the city in ensuring equity and excellence for all students during the health crisis.
- PCSB coordinated a bulk order of 1,600 T-Mobile MiFi devices for interested public charter schools in early April.
- The DME compiled the low- and no-cost programs and resources that commercial providers are offering to new and existing customers during the health crisis and through School Year 2020-2021. The programs range from free outdoor WiFi hotspots for a set period of time to full-year low-cost fixed home broadband with many typical barriers for sign-ups removed.

Based on an April 2020 survey administered by DC PCSB, PK-12 public charter schools are in the process of distributing approximately 7,500 learning devices and 2,400 MiFi hotspots. Alternative public charter schools are distributing 400 devices and 200 MiFis. Even with these latest efforts, there continues to be a significant need. Approximately 1,600 of the PK-12 public charter school students targeted to eventually receive devices still need them and as many as 2,100 students may still need internet access. For the alternative public charter schools, the learning device gap is closer to 300 students and the internet access gap is approximately 500 students. Once DCPS' inventories are exhausted, there is still an outstanding need of approximately 1,500 devices across DCPS households to ensure that at least every household with a DCPS student receives a device. Even accounting for the recent DCPS delivery of 10,000 MiFi hotspots to students, the connectivity needs will ramp up after the commercial provider's free access periods expire.

³⁴ 2014-2018 U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS). PolicyMap. 2018. "Estimated percent of households with a subscription to any type of broadband internet, between 2014-2018." <https://plcy.mp/KKvIVX>.

To respond to this need, the city can work in partnership with LEAs to expand internet access by capitalizing on existing access opportunities. The city can explore opportunities to pay for student access to fixed home broadband using the low-cost commercial provider programs (e.g., Comcast Essentials or RCN Internet First) as this better ensures robust speed and data security. Payment might be led by the LEA or the city can arrange a service provider provision with one of the designated companies. With federal or philanthropic support, LEAs might purchase additional MiFis and hotspots for students, particularly for students not in permanent housing situations. The city can expand areas with WiFi access by parking a WiFi-wired “roaming bus” in specific targeted areas after confirming that the bus’s WiFi is accessible to students indoors and supports social distancing guidance. The city can also explore ways to maximize use of existing public WiFi hotspots and other public WiFi resources like libraries and recreation centers. The city can also explore ways to enhance the public WiFi network infrastructure needed to provide internet access and connectivity for students living in low-income neighborhoods.

These recommendations require a combination of efforts from public-private partnerships and innovative technology models and can be led by technology-focused offices such as the city’s Connect DC and the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO). As other solving-digital-divide groups like Digital Equity in DC Education have advocated, these efforts might benefit from a “whole-of-government approach” where one city agency would act as the coordinating entity to ensure efficient and unduplicated effort. While an assessment is needed by the city’s technology experts to determine the best and most cost-effective means to broaden internet access, some specific recommendations in this category might include increasing the number of public WiFi hotspots available across targeted low-income and low-connectivity neighborhoods, either through the use of public infrastructure or via partnerships with local businesses; or, alternatively, the city could double-down on partnerships with internet service providers; or broadly distribute WiFi hotspots into homes. All of these solutions require students’ data and privacy protections – therefore, these should only be pursued if that protection can be assured.

The committee recommends that LEAs assess student need and coordinate both across LEAs and with private partners to ensure student access to learning devices. To understand the evolving landscape, all LEAs can conduct an assessment of student need for learning devices and connectivity at the end of School Year 2019-2020. This information can then be used to guide both philanthropic investments and citywide coordination. LEAs can coordinate where possible for bulk device procurement. Because school districts across the country are faced with similar challenges, there is competition for a limited inventory and bulk orders can assist in procurement and delivery.

Understanding that the transition to digital learning will be challenging for both students and families, LEAs can collaborate to provide technology support to assist families with this new approach. The city’s Digital Divide working group, composed of leaders from the DME, DCPS,

public charter schools, and experts in the technology field, has developed a library of technology and digital literacy resources for schools based on best practices. This resource can be distributed to all LEAs. The city can also explore providing technology support for students and families as they navigate new digital devices and connect to the internet starting over the summer, so that students and families are prepared going into the new school year. This could take the form of youth-provided technology support through the Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program (MBSYEP), or the expansion of DCPS Parent University modules and other tech-support focused programming on cable television during weekends. This support would be immediately beneficial to families and can provide job training opportunities for public high school and adult certification students.

PK-12 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

After-school Activities and Sports

As referenced above in the reopening guidelines, schools can consider after-school activities insofar as they are minimizing the intermingling of cohorts of students and can follow the same social-distancing and health guidelines as schools follow for the instructional day.

Sports, however, are not considered safe in the potential summer “Orange” phase, nor in “Yellow” once the school year begins.

Summer Programming

This summer, the city will provide DC youth with high-quality, engaging virtual summer programming that will support their academic and social-emotional development. Through a virtual model, city agencies and CBOs are offering live delivery of programming or creating modules and activity structures that will guide participants through asynchronous activities. This programming includes Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) summer camps, the Department of Employment Services’ (DOES) MBSYEP, and CBO programming funded by the Office of Out of School Time Grants and Youth Outcomes (OST).

DCPS is offering virtual summer school that will provide students with opportunities for enrichment and keep students on the path to graduation. DCPS programming will be delivered virtually and is designed to meet the needs of student groups most in need of support including English learners, students in need of credit recovery to proceed to the next grade level or graduate, and students who are required to participate in the Extended School Year due to special education and related services requirements. Many public charter LEAs are also offering virtual summer enrichment, programming, or academic instruction to continue learning over the summer.

When possible, city agencies are implementing programming that meets or exceeds capacity in previous years to ensure that students have access to ongoing opportunities over the summer. In line with implementation this spring, grab-and-go meal service will continue through the

summer and into the fall at DCPS sites across the district. Additional city meal sites may be coordinated to meet demand.

The committee recommends connecting additional enrichment opportunities focused on literacy and social-emotional learning to students participating in experiences at library learning hubs to expand the richness of this experience and leverage the broad array of talents in the OST community.

Summer is also an opportunity to build bridges between the high school and college settings and maintain programming associated with dual enrollment, “early college,” and summer bridge experiences at local colleges and universities. Many DC institutions of higher education have partnerships with high schools – both through DCPS, charter LEAs and in partnership with OSSE. They provide a rich learning and readiness experience to high school students offering authentic experiential learning. The summer is a pivotal time to maintain this programming to support youth and give them an additional outlet for academic development, for professional learning, and to build community with partners on campus. The committee recommends exploring creative ways to deliver the content virtually.

Toward the end of the summer, schools will potentially launch the Orange phase, which will begin the transition to serving students through in-person schooling.

Career and Technical Education

Career and Technical Education (CTE) plays a critical role in preparing students for future success in the workforce. However, CTE courses face challenges as LEAs plan to reopen as CTE courses often involve hands-on learning experiences that are more challenging to adapt to a virtual setting. As LEAs consider how to integrate CTE courses into their reopening plans, the committee recommends consideration of the following factors.

Curriculum and Scheduling

While some CTE pathway curricula can be easily adapted to a virtual learning platform (e.g., Project Lead the Way), other pathways require significant curricular and pedagogical modifications to be implemented with fidelity via virtual learning. In order to serve the needs of students who continue learning at home, LEAs can develop virtual lesson plans for CTE content areas for School Year 2020-2021. As a part of this effort, LEAs can identify resources that integrate with their learning management systems and identify virtual simulations for courses that require more hands-on practice such as automotive technology. The city can consider providing support or connections to smaller LEAs that may not have the capacity or resources to develop such curricular plans. Additionally, for students who are learning virtually, the committee recommends that LEAs provide students access to devices with the appropriate software and hardware to complete CTE course work (e.g., Adobe Photoshop).

CTE courses also require scheduling a student for the right courses in the right sequence. If alternating in-school attendance is necessary, class scheduling for CTE courses should be

considered to support a student's ability to progress along the specific sequence of specialized courses.

Professional Development

A significant number of CTE teachers are required to complete pathway-specific professional development to ensure they have the most up to date skills, knowledge, and awareness of the newest innovations and advancements within their subject matter area. Often, the most intensive of these professional developments take place over the summer; at this point, most professional development providers have announced virtual offerings that educators will be able to complete from the safety of their own homes. Because CTE teachers often represent a small proportion of a high school's educators, it is important to create regular opportunities for CTE teachers of the same pathway areas to build and sustain strong connections, share ideas and innovations, and support one another in their practices. To that end, LEAs can consider ways to sustain or increase professional development for CTE teachers during this virtual learning period. As a contingency plan, summer professional development can focus on getting teachers well-versed in any virtual learning platforms or educational technology tools teachers will need to successfully facilitate student learning.

Certifications

Industry certifications are an important component of career education pathways. At this moment in time, however, very few industry-recognized certifications can be administered virtually (e.g., Adobe Premier Pro, Adobe Photoshop, ServSafe Food Handler, AHLEI Guest Service Professional, and Autodesk). The committee recommends that the city explore opening a centralized testing center where CTE students from across the city could safely take the certifications they have prepared for. LEAs should proactively identify facilities with specialized equipment (e.g., Ballou High School's Auto Tech garage) for hands-on learning and assessment as part of the exam and develop protocols to host students in small groups in a safe environment. The city can consider ways it can help streamline information sharing among LEAs and programs, so providers have the most recent updates to the lists of certifications that can be taken virtually and explore ways to collaborate on the virtual preparation needed for these certifications.

Seat Hour Requirements

A small number of CTE pathways, including the Certified Nursing Assistant, early childhood education, cosmetology, and barbering, require students to complete a certain number of in-seat hours in order to sit for state licensure exams or national certifications. The city can continue to work with the DC Board of Barbering and Cosmetology and the national Council for Professional Recognition to address seat requirement challenges.

Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning (guest speakers, site visits, and paid internships) are an essential part of excellent Career Education courses. In preparation for virtual summer internships, members of the DC Career Academy Network have created a virtual internship framework which outlines three key components:

- Industry engagement and mentorship (e.g., check-ins between supervisor and student, weekly work-based learning);
- Industry project with weekly deliverables and
- Professional skill development (e.g., Microsoft Office Certifications, workshops on professional communication, online learning available through Nepris).

The city can support the continuation of virtual work-based learning in a number of ways. First, it can continue the MBSYEP, which serves as the primary source of funding for wages for summer interns. Second, the city can encourage agencies to host virtual interns throughout Summer 2020 and School Year 2020-2021, as many LEAs have concerns about their abilities to find sufficient placements for all students who were preparing for internships prior to COVID-19. LEAs can prepare to continue virtual work-based learning opportunities in School Year 2020-2021 and consider sustaining practices of virtual guest speakers and career panels. LEAs can also consider the feasibility of allowing student interns to complete virtual work in a socially distanced setting, such as at their school with Career Academy staff supervision, given concerns that students may not be able to properly focus or access consistent internet from home. LEAs can also ensure that summer interns have access to devices and hotspots through the summer 2020 internship period. Lastly, as we move into School Year 2020-2021, DOES can explore how LEAs and students who were not able to participate in a summer internship can submit required paperwork to enroll in the Office of Youth Programs – Year-Round Programs virtually, just as DOES has established with MBSYEP, thus ensuring all CTE seniors can participate in a paid-internship opportunity aligned to their program of study.

Future Labor Market Demands

The local and regional economy continues to change and evolve during this time. The city and LEAs should closely monitor how the crisis affects the labor market in terms of employment opportunities and post-secondary programs available for our graduates and should consider what new career education pathways might need to be established or uplifted to respond to new market demands.

Private and Parochial Schools

As in the case of public schools, all private and parochial schools have closed their physical campuses in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and are continuing instruction through distance learning. The committee understands that many private and parochial schools are awaiting clear city guidance on school reopening and recommends the city engage in regular

communication on this guidance, as well as to determine ways to provide private and parochial schools access to DC Health advice and guidance.

To this end, the committee believes that many of the recommendations and opportunities identified within this report are directly relevant for all schools across the city, including private and parochial schools. The committee strongly encourages the city to engage directly with private and parochial schools through the Association for Independent Schools of Greater Washington, for example, and the Archdiocese. Of particular note is the committee's desire to ensure that all schools, regardless of school type or governance model, comply with the school health and safety guidelines.

One important, unique consideration for private schools is that their student bodies include students who commute from Virginia and Maryland, as well as those who are DC residents – a circumstance that brings additional complexity to concerns regarding reduced mixing of cohorts.

Legislation, Regulation, and Policy

As students continue learning at home, LEAs will need to adapt their supports for students and families as well as expectations for staff. The city can also consider how to adapt measures of accountability for LEAs to meet current needs. Families have indicated that at this time the differing procedures and messages coming from LEAs is causing additional confusion and anxiety. The city can encourage LEAs to follow common policies and procedures across all schools to respond to families' concerns. OSSE can also consider creating distance learning standards that lay out expectations, guardrails, and flexibilities for LEAs to work within, which can be a foundational public document to help support this work.

School Operating Status

Once school buildings reopen there remains the risk that schools will need to close due to exposure to the virus. Closing schools is disruptive and should be avoided unless necessary. The committee recommends that the decision to close a school after buildings reopen for in-person instruction be consistent across the entire public school system and reflect public health expertise. The city can create a standard policy for school operating status across all LEAs in response to instances of COVID-19 exposure and establish a standing committee with decision-making authority. This committee can include representatives from the Executive Office of the Mayor, DC Health, DME, OSSE, DCPS, DC PCSB, and potentially the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD). School leaders can be provided a direct line to this group, which will provide clear, definitive instructions on whether to close a school in the event of exposure. All LEAs can also follow standard cleaning guidance both for standard operations in each of the phases and enhanced for COVID-19 community exposure.

Attendance

Introducing flexibilities around in-person attendance might require legislative changes to Washington, DC's compulsory attendance laws. By allowing families to continue learning at home in certain circumstances, the city can consider redefining truancy and attendance, as well as how those are linked to grading and graduation policies. In defining these terms, the committee recommends that the city consider the information on attendance/student engagement that it would like to capture, as well as the attendance definitions under law. It is important to consider both what metrics the city wants to measure and how the city will use the data that is captured. There are forms of attendance data that are important for LEAs to capture and for continuous improvement, but that are not necessarily appropriate for citywide reporting. Additional consideration can be given to how systems can capture a consistent measure without overly constraining flexibility and innovation in learning models that may be particularly important during this time.

The new definition of attendance might consider:

- What is the purpose or behavior in schools and students the city wants to track (and promote)?
- What does the city want to hold schools accountable for?
- What student action does the city actually measure?
- What are the implications for equity?
- What can the attendance systems accurately measure across the city?

Toward the goal of student safety, well-being, and academic achievement, schools might consider tracking connections with families along with student engagement with learning activities. While secondary students are learning at home and involved in asynchronous learning experiences, period-based attendance might not be appropriate for reporting purposes. This would require a review of the 80-20 approach to daily attendance.

Enrollment

The launch of School Year 2020-2021 with students in both in-person and virtual environments will be complex for families to navigate and some families will likely take longer to return to school or to decide on a school for their family. The city can continue to explore flexibilities for enrollment procedures. Because of this uncertainty, OSSE might also consider how to conduct the enrollment count and examine any additional methodologies needed to most accurately capture student enrollment trends.

Assessments and STAR Ratings

Due to the urgency of this crisis, LEAs may consider a focus on using formative as well as summative assessments to inform instruction that meets students where they are, including formative or diagnostic tests like MAP, which can be given over a short period of time in the fall. This assessment data can be used to drive continuous improvements in teaching and learning across both in-person and at-home learning methods. The city may consider planning

for gaps in longitudinal data from the lack of statewide assessments in the 2019-2020 school year and identifying ways to share District-wide data where possible. OSSE can consider changes to the STAR Framework to maintain consistency and transparency of information during this time of change, while complying with local and federal requirements.

Teacher Evaluations

As the city moves towards the adoption of a dual pathway learning platform, both virtual and in person, schools can review their evaluation protocols and policies to ensure they include the appropriate content, process changes, and allow for new flexibilities. Schools and LEAs may consider adjustments to particular components of their evaluation program to suit the needs of educators during the pandemic. The committee recommends taking time over the summer to clearly define educator expectations in a hybrid learning model; review and revise elements of the educator and staff evaluation process where needed; and provide training on the new guidelines as part of the school opening process.

Workforce

To build community confidence in schools and ensure that schools are able to respond to evolving COVID-19-related needs, the committee recommends schools evaluate personnel capacity focused on standards related to health protocols, cleanliness, and student support. The addition of personnel capacity might involve new partnerships or internal budget trade-offs or might require additional budget for LEAs to be considered as a part of the District's overall financial landscape.

All schools can designate a COVID-19 lead, who is responsible for compliance with health-related protocols including communicating with families, reporting diagnosed cases to the DME and DC Health, distributing updated guidance, and fielding questions from staff related to policy changes. To meet enhanced cleaning protocols, schools may also require additional custodial and operations personnel depending on current levels of staffing.

Schools might need additional health capacity to respond to the school's surging health needs. All staff can receive training on how to identify COVID-19 symptoms and appropriate precautions to take in their environment. The city can also consider how to ensure we take full advantage of our existing nursing staff, leverage health-based partners, and how to get additional capacity into schools that need it.

Schools may also need to implement an increased focus on trauma-informed practices and social-emotional learning to support the mental well-being of students and staff, including teachers. In order to meet this increased need, schools may require additional professional development for all staff along with potential additional positions for social workers, psychologists, counselors, and other mental health practitioners. Schools can consider how these practitioners offer services virtually and in person.

Schools may face increased staff absences as staff become ill or are required to quarantine. The District might require an expanded pool of qualified substitute teachers, and may be best served by a District-wide substitute pool rather than one segmented by LEA.

Schools may need a tailored and robust professional development plan that equips teachers with new skills to implement effective instruction across remote platforms, builds their confidence and skills with online learning programs, and helps them find new ways to build community with students in this environment – both online and in person with updated social distance measures. Schools can consider how to make the professional learning responsive to educator, student, and family needs and whether it can be led by experts in the field locally, across the country, or through a peer-to-peer model given the changing nature of this work. The committee expects teachers will continue to discover personal successes and strategies that would be beneficial to share through collaborative circles and professional learning communities.

School staff will need explicit training by DC Health and other city leaders with expertise in the new health and safety guidelines. The content of the learning series might include topics on the phases of reopening, social distancing measures in the classroom and school spaces, proper hygiene practices, and how to communicate issues of safety concern. This training can be completed over the summer before LEAs reopen campus and building spaces for in-person student learning. The city may develop virtual health and safety modules for educators to participate in before a longer in-person training session once they return for summer professional development. All educators can complete these trainings as a prerequisite to opening.

School staff can be granted a range of flexibilities to help them adapt and thrive under the new work conditions. The flexibilities could include the opportunity for more leave to address health and wellness needs for themselves and their loved ones, space to move between instructional modes that are virtual and in person, as well as training and technical assistance to implementing new safety measures. Also, to manage the response to COVID-19, schools may consider the addition of flexible sick leave and remote work policies. For example, existing leave policies could be amended to ensure that all staff have adequate sick leave options if they become ill or are required to self-quarantine. One idea considered by the committee is the creation of a COVID-specific leave balance that all staff members could access if they have not accrued adequate sick leave time. Recognizing that the toll of this pandemic impacts both physical and mental health, LEAs can also consider adding additional mental health days to regular sick and PTO leave policies as educators adjust to the stressors of the pandemic and its consequences. Any such policies should align with federal law including COVID-19 FMLA legislation. LEAs can also explore creating remote work policies for at-risk staff or staff with at-risk family members. These policies may consider who is eligible to work remotely and how this will impact their day-to-day work.

CHILDCARE

The childcare sector is critical for economic recovery in DC. Not only do child development facilities employ thousands of teachers and staff in small business settings, but childcare is an essential service for families as parents and guardians return to in-person employment. Quality early learning helps to set up children for future academic and life success, and access to high-quality, affordable early care and education is a top concern for families and our city.

While early childhood education in Washington, DC takes place through a mixed-delivery system including licensed child development facilities (also known as childcare providers or CBOs), as well as pre-Kindergarten programs in DCPS and public charter schools, for this section, the committee has focused specifically on child development facilities. For more information on pre-Kindergarten programs, review the PK-12 section.

CHILDCARE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Members of the committee heard significant input and feedback from the early childhood education community, including childcare providers, families with children enrolled in centers and homes, advocacy organizations, and other leaders in this sector, about challenges, opportunities, and support needed to further reopen and move toward more in-person services.

- **Quality Improvement Network (QIN) Policy Council**, a group of parent and family leaders with children attending subsidy-participating child development facilities, discussed reopening at both the March and April meetings.
- **Weekly calls with the Early Childhood Education community** were conducted by OSSE starting in late March. Approximately 300 individuals have joined weekly for updates and to share questions and feedback about ongoing needs. On the May 4 call, OSSE specifically invited suggestions and questions related to the reopening effort.
- **A survey from the Under Three Coalition and DC Association for the Education of Young Children (DCAEYC)** of providers about COVID-19 impacts highlighted key issues, questions, and opportunities as expressed by the early childhood education community.
- **The Early Childhood Education Reopening Working Group**, hosted by OSSE, is composed of approximately 20 childcare providers and leaders in the early childhood education community. The working group launched in early May and is focused on practitioner-to-practitioner conversations and collective problem-solving and thought partnership.
- **Individual interviews** with specific center directors, home providers, and early childhood education leaders, were conducted by members of the committee.

- **The ReOpen DC Surveys** encouraged childcare providers and the early care and education (ECE) community to share specific suggestions about the needs of the early care and education sector.

Feedback from Parents and Families

As of this writing, parents and caregivers were primarily concerned with the safety of their children, and generally did not express readiness to return to in-person childcare at this time. While families are deeply interested in a robust early childhood education sector, they want to ensure that care is safe for their children, their children's teachers, and other loved ones.

While OSSE has continued to provide financial support for families receiving childcare subsidies and has waived family copays during the public health emergency, families wondered what financial support would look like in future months. For families not receiving childcare subsidies, some expressed concerns that they would not be able to continue paying for services, particularly if their child's center or home remained closed. Many families have planned far in advance to secure a spot in a specific childcare facility and expressed fears about giving up the spot should they be unable to continue payment.

The city may consider how to help families understand public health guidelines for safely returning to in-person activities, the steps child development facilities are taking to make it safe to return their child to care, guidance for accessing telehealth services for children with delays and/or disabilities during different phases of reopening, and what families need to do in order to continue ensuring public health and safety procedures are met (e.g., checking children's temperatures and screening for respiratory symptoms at home).

Feedback from Childcare Providers and Other Early Childhood Education Leaders

As noted above, childcare providers face a unique set of challenging circumstances that make it particularly difficult for them to plan for the future. As independent businesses who often depend on private payments from families to continue operating, the pandemic-related closure has been difficult for childcare providers. While OSSE has continued public subsidy payments throughout the public health emergency, providers who depend completely or partially on "private pay" families are concerned that they will not be able to weather the closures without further financial support. Both subsidy and non-subsidy providers are concerned about the economic viability of their businesses during recovery, particularly with limited group sizes and increased cleaning and sanitation needs. Discussions reflected anxiety that the support provided to date may not continue, or that the level of support will not meet the needs providers see during reopening. Per the Under 3 DC/DCAEYC survey, many childcare providers have had a difficult time accessing small business supports such as the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program.

Some childcare providers have also expressed a desire for more specific guidance or requirements on operating during the pandemic and on reopening; for example, more specific mandates on whether to remain open or closed. Providers have also expressed the need to have a clear guidance of what standard of care means during this time to make informed decisions. While the city has provided guidance and recommendations, some providers have expressed that more specific requirements or mandates make it easier to communicate with families about expectations, as well as providing clarity for lenders, boards of directors, and other stakeholders.

Childcare providers have raised many questions about health and safety, including what guidance will look like in future phases, and how to best operationalize it in practical terms, particularly when caring for young children. Providers have also voiced questions and concerns around how to access the supplies and services needed (e.g., cleaning supplies). They have asked for guidance on how to support ECE staff's, families', and children's increased mental health needs with trauma-informed practices during this time of uncertainty, and many other areas. Providers expressed questions and a desire for deeper understanding around the liabilities involved in opening before a vaccine is available, the expectations and procedures should a child or staff member fall ill with COVID-19, and how to manage child or staff exclusions due to illness, medically fragile status or exposure and need to quarantine.

Providers also raised questions about how to manage uncertainty around ECE staff availability, given early childhood educators' own family obligations (particularly given the regional nature of the workforce and schools in the region operating remotely) and/or personal health risks. They expressed the need for staff to have access to COVID-19 testing.

Providers have surfaced a range of technical assistance and support needs, including the need for comprehensive and consistent virtual trainings to prepare staff to meet new health and safety guidelines and support providers' concerns about better understanding and bolstering their financial literacy/forecasting and business management courses. Providers have also expressed a need to have a platform or communication channels to share best practices and problem-solve. Providers also suggested a live list of resources (e.g., supply vendor list) that providers can access on an ongoing basis. DC Child Care Connections, DC's childcare resource and referral agency, may be able to house this resource. Finally, providers also asked that DC continue to look for ways to review supply of and demand for childcare over time.

CHILDCARE OPPORTUNITIES AND CORE RECOMMENDATIONS

Mayor Bowser's vision for recovery is for the District of Columbia to emerge even stronger, for all residents. There are significant opportunities for the childcare sector as the District works toward recovery. The committee's primary goal is ensuring the safety of the children, families and staff in child development facilities. All policy and guidance during the recovery must be

based on the guidance of public health professionals and must consider how health and safety guidance around social distancing or other public health recommendations can apply to young children. Childcare providers should continue the current health and safety measures in place and follow all updated requirements as they are issued by the CDC and DC Health, such as staggering drop-off and pick-up times, limiting outside visitors and outdoor trips, keeping children in small “cohorts” that do not mix, washing hands, and sanitizing shared surfaces and toys regularly, and should be ready to share with families how they are addressing these health and safety guidelines.

The committee is also focused on ensuring a robust childcare sector and encouraging policies, guidance and supports that meet provider needs wherever possible. Our goal is to support both families and childcare providers in feeling safe and secure in returning to in-person learning environments where they are able.

Consider specific criteria or guidance, given limited enrollment capacity

Childcare is currently operating in a status aligned to the PK-12 “orange” phase. Childcare has been deemed an essential business and a limited number of childcare providers continue to operate under specific public health guidelines and limitations. Childcare providers that have remained open are currently encouraged to serve the children of essential workers. The six emergency childcare sites stood up by OSSE in partnership with three providers are serving children of healthcare workers, first responders, and essential government employees and contractors.

Due to public health guidance that functionally limits enrollment capacity, the city may consider issuing more specific guidance or recommendations around who to serve and how to prioritize among currently enrolled families and/or new families in need of care. For example, the focus might remain on providing care for the children of family members called back to report in person to their workplace (e.g., teachers). As PK-12 schools consider alternating schedules for in-person and distance learning, providers may face growing needs as some families may have additional needs for in-person childcare for school-aged children during the day (not just before- and aftercare).

Finally, some families may not feel ready to send their children back to in-person care during initial rounds of opening. Providers and families may need support with age-appropriate distance learning strategies for young children learning at home. The Under 3 DC/DCAEYC report noted that a return to in-person group childcare will likely be gradual and that supports are needed for providers and families as they return throughout the phased reopening.

Consider coordination of additional training and supplies to support health and safety requirements

Childcare providers have expressed a need to understand more deeply how to implement health and safety guidance, particularly around social distancing for infants and very young

children. Additional training, technical assistance, and peer-to-peer learning communities may help early childhood educators adapt more quickly in a rapidly changing environment.

In addition, providers have raised the need for expedited access to PPE and cleaning supplies, which have been in limited supply across the country during the pandemic, as a necessary condition for further reopening. As was discussed regarding PK-12 schools, the city may consider centralized procurement or distribution of these materials, thereby leveraging capacity and joint purchasing power in order to increase access for the education community broadly.

Finally, the level of disruption and trauma caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated closures is unprecedented, and families, children, and early childhood educators may have increased needs around mental health as a result. Providers may need extra training in supporting the mental health needs of the children and families at their facility, as well as that of their staff.

Consider subsidy policy updates and support to access additional sources of funding

Childcare providers are deeply concerned about the financial viability of continuing their businesses when they may need to hire additional staff to maintain new ratios, conduct extra cleaning, sanitation, and health procedures, and potentially retrofit their physical spaces, while potentially enrolling fewer children due to social distancing guidelines. The social distancing and limitations on group size currently required in health guidance pose challenges for providers who want to meet the health guidelines, but also must have a certain number of children enrolled or attending in order to stay financially stable.

Providers continue to ask that the District look into flexibilities around subsidy rules to provide as much leeway as possible for both providers and families and to consider any other sources of financial support for non-subsidy providers. The District can explore a long-term subsidy policy throughout the pandemic, beyond the immediate public health emergency, that provides as much stability as possible while adhering to federal legal requirements around subsidies.

Childcare providers may also benefit from additional support in identifying and accessing other sources of funds, including potential private opportunities and local or federal small business relief loans or grants. OSSE has partnered with the Low-Income Investment Fund (LIIF) to regularly share information about grants and low-interest loans available to childcare providers, and there may be opportunities to further enhance support and technical assistance to providers so they may fully leverage these opportunities.

Explore flexibility in licensing regulations to help providers open and expand capacity rapidly

Licensing standards and compliance inspections are important for maintaining the health and safety of learning environments for young children. While some requirements cannot be

relaxed (e.g., background checks for workers), other areas may allow for more flexibility through the use of waivers and may allow facilities to adapt to changing circumstances more quickly.

OSSE is already exploring conducting virtual inspections to allow for the use of currently unlicensed space or changes to ages served to cover increased demand for care and the health and safety guidance on a rapid timeline. OSSE can further explore how to expedite licensing for new providers, staff, increased space, or reopening of providers who had to close, and how to provide some flexibilities for inspections for centers and homes that were in good standing before the public health emergency. These flexibilities might be temporary, either for an initial period of reopening, or for a longer period until the abatement of the public health emergency.

Communicate with families

Given the particular needs of learning environments for young children, the District may consider conducting a survey of early childhood families to assess what they need to feel safe returning to early learning environments.

In stakeholder interviews, early childhood stakeholders pointed out that families may not feel sure of what they need to do in order to return their children safely to care, or of what health and safety precautions facilities are taking to keep children and staff healthy. The District might explore a communications campaign that helps families understand how COVID-19 may manifest in children and how to help keep their children safe, such as checking the child's temperature before dropping them off, and the current guidance on health and safety for providers. Increased understanding of new guidelines for ECE providers and staff may help families feel more comfortable returning their child to a childcare setting.

Finally, as the District continues to build resources and supports for distance learning that are appropriate, engaging and accessible for all, these efforts might be extended to distance learning for young children where possible. Additional resources may be available to support parents and caregivers helping their children to learn and grow at home.

CHILDCARE LESSONS LEARNED DURING STAY-AT-HOME

Through our deliberations and extensive stakeholder outreach, we have identified three important lessons from our city's experiences thus far.

The childcare sector, which already had a complex set of economic considerations, is feeling financial strain and uncertainty along multiple dimensions—for families, staff and providers themselves.

The city can **consider exploring multiple channels and ways to communicate across the breadth and diversity of the early childhood community, including written policy updates, calls, and regular email updates.** The childcare sector is broad and diverse, with more than 400 licensed childcare providers across DC that range greatly in size, model, revenue and operating

models, geography, families served, and more. Going forward, providers are eager to have more practitioner-to-practitioner conversations, and OSSE has launched a new provider working group as a step toward this.

Even during a public health crisis, **families have ongoing childcare needs and the city continues to adapt to meet those needs to continue essential industries.** A number of families are accessing the emergency childcare options stood up by OSSE and a small number of open providers, and the city has developed clear health protocols, based on CDC and DC Health guidance to support their operations. At the same time, many families have also expressed concerns about congregate care during the immediate public health emergency, even when clear health protocols are in place.

CHILDCARE CHALLENGES

Childcare providers occupy a unique space within the Washington, DC community. They are independent businesses (most for-profit, though some are non-profit) that adhere to health, safety, and other licensing regulations designed to keep children safe. They include both childcare centers and family home providers, serving children from birth to age 12 (including out-of-school-time care for school-aged children).

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, childcare providers face many of the same challenges as PK-12 schools. Providers are working to understand and act on new and rapidly changing health guidance while caring for children. They are also grappling with concerns about their staff's safety and availability of staff to report to work in person, access to critical supplies and services, and questions and fears from parents and families about how to keep children safe.

At the same time, childcare providers also face many additional challenges and uncertainties. Childcare, at its core, is an in-person service and function. Unlike public and public charter schools, which are fully publicly funded but operate under considerable control and accountability from the federal and local government, child development facilities are funded through a mix of public and private funding. The majority of the District's child development providers participate in the public childcare subsidy program for some or all of their enrollment capacity, but providers also rely, in part or in full, on family payments. Families, including those who are financially vulnerable and affected by the public health emergency, may now struggle to afford tuition fees and copayments. In addition, public health guidance under the pandemic includes restrictions on group size and space requirements that effectively limit enrollment for many providers.

Because of the combination of these factors, childcare providers face an increased level of uncertainty about their continued financial viability. This level of financial uncertainty, in addition to the unknowns around how the pandemic will evolve and what the health guidance will look like in future months, and lack of clarity about what families will want or be able to

afford, has made it particularly difficult for childcare providers to plan as they think about reopening.

CHILDCARE REOPENING GUIDANCE

Currently, OSSE has issued [guidance](#) for childcare facilities that remain open, in partnership with DC Health and based on CDC guidance. The guidance includes a limit of 10 people per room, including adults and children; daily symptom screening; staggered drop-offs/pick-ups; strict dismissal criteria in the event of positive cases; and more. As noted above, there are as of late April, 38 providers out of 470 total licensed child development facilities who are currently open, in addition to six emergency childcare sites established by the city to serve children of healthcare workers and essential government employees.

Similar guidance, particularly around the group size limit of 10, would remain in place for phases 1 and 2 as well, with ongoing review by OSSE with DC Health and any updates as needed. Additional childcare providers would be encouraged to open in each phase, with a focus in Phase 1 particularly on families returning to in-person work (e.g., teachers).

In Phase 3, group size restrictions for each room would likely be relaxed, and all or nearly all licensed child development facilities would likely be open.

CHILDCARE PREPARATION AND RESOURCES NEEDED FOR REOPENING

See above recommendations for the preparation and resources needed and OSSE's current [guidance documents](#) for what is already in place.

HIGHER EDUCATION

As part of the education infrastructure of the District, higher education enrolls over 84,000 students and employs over 23,000 faculty and staff. As a sector, it faces many challenges shared by PK-12 as a result of COVID-19: sudden reliance on an exclusive online environment; related student, faculty, and staff challenges; space planning for a new academic year where many of the variables are unknown; and determining how to maintain enrollment and best serve the students.

However, higher education differs significantly from the public PK-12 systems in several key ways. Washington, DC, colleges and universities are a major economic engine for the District

and the region. They bring money to the local economy: over 90% of their students are non-residents. They provide three of the city's large hospital facilities and have tremendous on-campus health capacity to support student health. Only one university is public and serves primarily DC residents. All others are private, some large and heavily residential, drawing students from every state in the U.S. and many foreign countries, one small and serving a primarily local, commuter population.

District colleges and universities vary by size and type and student population.

Institution	# of Employees*	Students			
		# Enrolled	Full time Students	% Full Time Freshman DC Resident	% Freshman 24 & under
American University	5,050	14,000	11,435	1%	98%
Georgetown University	8,780	19,204	14,741	2%	94%
Howard University	3,882	9,139	8,500	1%	96%
The Catholic University of America	2,388	5,956	4,257	2%	N/A
The George Washington University	9,173	28,172	19,099	1%	89%
Trinity Washington University	581	1,782	1,127	48%	N/A
Gallaudet University	745	1,557	1,341	1%	51%
University of the District of Columbia (UDC)**	1,785	4,244	2,110	80%	51%

*Includes staff and full-time and part-time faculty.

**Enrollment does not include approximately 3,000 students enrolled in free Workforce Development certificate programs.

All universities included in this report belong to the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area (the Consortium). The Consortium is a non-profit educational association of 17 member colleges and universities representing nearly 290,000 students, committed to the advancement of higher education in the Washington metropolitan area. The Consortium was originally founded by District universities to share library resources and course offerings.

Given the regional nature of District institutions, the Consortium is facilitating a reopening planning task force made up of institutional representatives to ensure that best thinking and best practices are available to all campuses. Given the key differences and unique circumstances for each of the city's colleges and universities, it is critical that DC Health and the District continue to work in partnership with institutions themselves and the Consortium to develop strong guidance on the proper mitigation expectations in the areas of testing, contact tracing, isolation, campus cleaning, social distancing, and citywide interdependencies. Each institution should then customize its reopening plan to align with community need. In

partnership with the Consortium, every college and university in DC is currently developing a campus reopening plan that outlines multiple scenarios from fully reopening campuses to continuation of their current operating status.

HIGHER EDUCATION STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Information provided by local, regional and national health and government officials, as well as higher education professional associations, is constantly monitored by each campus. For this report, the committee solicited input from every institutional executive officer, who in turn relied on input from their various students, faculty, staff, alumni, Boards of Trustees, and affiliates. In addition, regional, national and international data was provided by the Consortium.

HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES AND CORE RECOMMENDATIONS

The higher education institutions in Washington, DC, are diverse. They are religious and secular, private and public, large and small. No matter the orientation, they all recognize the role of an educated populace in creating a more equitable society. There is opportunity in the current crisis to make higher education more easily accessible to a broader range of individuals – residents, students and members of the community – and reshape it in ways that put into practice the values we all embrace. To those ends, the committee has identified the following opportunities and recommendations:

Treat student healthcare centers as valuable extensions of the citywide health care system and equip them to fully serve the needs of the ~90,000 campus-based community members.

As noted previously, all determinations about when schools, including institutions of higher education, begin to reopen will be directed by citywide health and readiness data as set forth by DC Health. Higher education institutions will be monitoring citywide recommendations closely. They recognize the unique challenges they face as residential campuses: mini-cities serving diverse, mobile populations. Once the city provides a green light for reopening, institutions can offer strong, primary healthcare for students, faculty, and staff and can take on additional testing, treatment, and contact tracing associated with COVID-19. All colleges and universities have a central student health center in place, many of which function as the primary care provider for students. The committee recommends leveraging the student health care centers as a full extension of the citywide health care system to alleviate any strains resulting from cases in the city and provide immediate, quality treatment to members of the campus community. In order to function in this manner, they may need additional testing kits, training, and staff to support contact tracing and ongoing communication with city networks. This will allow them to test all students and manage contact tracing on campus. When possible, campus clinics can also offer service to neighbors off-campus who reside in proximity to the college or university. The key to mitigating risk as campuses reopen is consistent,

comprehensive testing capacity on-site. As GWU President Thomas LeBlanc shared, “We cannot invite our employees back to campus, our students back in residence, our faculty back in their offices, unless we have testing, tracing and a quarantine capability.”³⁵ Finally, the committee recommends partnering with the American College Health Association to develop detailed campus-specific plans to build this capacity at campus-based health centers.

Embrace online education as a valuable learning tool for the modern student.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, institutions have had to pivot quickly to rely more fully on electronic tools in the workplace and classroom. Though it varies from school to school, as an industry, higher education has not been as nimble in transitioning to the information age as the business sector, and this has been an opportunity to embrace more components of the hybrid learning model. While colleges and universities have delivered content through online platforms for years, campuses frequently opt for face-to-face instruction as a preferred instructional choice. New and creative modes of content discovery and delivery may be developed in the course of expanding online education. Some majors may need to be reimaged, especially in the health professions, where courses are traditionally hands-on in nature. There may also be opportunities to integrate online learning for internships, study abroad, summer, and other programs that are traditional parts of university life.

Develop equity content and pedagogy

The pandemic has highlighted the structural gaps in American society. The preparation and opportunity gap, sometimes referred to as the achievement gap, is entrenched in our educational outcomes. As the education sector rethinks and redesigns education more broadly, and higher education in particular, it should include the development of content and pedagogy specific to the learning needs of Black, Brown, and economically disadvantaged students. Through this approach, higher education institutions have an opportunity to more equitably serve the students of Washington, DC.

Expand access to public mental health services

Individual institutions will face challenges supporting the increased mental health needs of their students, particularly around the impact from long-term social isolation, the deaths of family and friends due to COVID-19, and the erosive effects of long-term exposure to racism on the health of African Americans. The local Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and Predominantly Black Institutions (PBI), including UDC, Howard University, and Trinity Washington University, are particularly aware of and concerned about high morbidity and mortality rates among African Americans and the economically disadvantaged. While

³⁵ GW Today. 2020. “Leadership Discusses COVID-19 Budget Impact with Faculty Senate.” https://gwtoday.gwu.edu/leadership-discusses-covid-19-budget-impact-faculty-senate?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Leadership%20Discusses%20COVID-19%20Budget%20Impact%20with%20Faculty%20Senate&utm_campaign=051120

addressing the expanded mental health needs of our community will be a challenge, it is also an opportunity to redesign the way that institutions offer access to these services. As colleges and universities transition to distance learning, many have already increased their capacity to include tele-counseling and tele-support groups, and some have established spirit support initiatives. Moving forward into a new school year, institutions may explore strategies to ensure that public mental health services are accessible through multiple formats, known and available to all college students.

Increase support from local colleges and universities for District students

As graduating high school students consider their next steps, there is an opportunity for Washington, DC-based institutions to attract more students from the District and surrounding areas and keep talent local. Due to COVID-19, students may choose to not attend colleges and universities in farther away states or internationally because of transportation concerns or hesitancy to live in residence halls at out-of-state schools. DC universities have an opportunity to publicize their programs and enroll students who might otherwise have pursued other educational opportunities.

Serve as a key bridge to foster connection and address learning gaps for new college students

Student academic success involves more than the faculty and student relationship. Academic counselors and advisers, co-curricular directors, tutors, internship facilitators, and resident hall advisors are integral contributors to the academic well-being of students. For incoming college and high school students, the final months of their previous school year were not in person or traditional. Additionally, some standard measures of academic preparedness will now be absent. In order for these students to be successful, institutions may have an opportunity to begin community outreach and relationship building virtually over the summer and offer appropriate course remediations and/or academic bridges for students who lost instruction due to inadequate online education provision or lack of internet or device access during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

HIGHER EDUCATION LESSONS LEARNED DURING STAY-AT-HOME

The higher education sector is agile and resilient. In response to COVID-19, institutions remain fully operational, even though buildings are closed, and students continue to receive quality instruction from professors and faculty.

Relationships established through the Consortium among institutions of higher learning added great value in a time of need. The Consortium established a reopening task force that meets regularly to compare notes, develop best practices, and ensure regional cooperation. As the semester comes to a close and attention turns to reopening the campuses, each college and university is developing a plan that is best suited to its circumstances and student population.

The response demonstrated the value of peer-to-peer sharing of best practices as universities grappled with responding to similar challenges. The strength of these relationships may serve as an opportunity to continue to align and partner in future work.

Accessible and timely communication is critical. As universities adopted new methods of instruction, they were required to communicate with both faculty and students about updated procedures and expectations. In future phases of response, continued open lines of communication will be key for a robust response and for building community.

In transitioning to online learning, universities confronted the limitations of technology. Technology is an indispensable modern tool, but an incomplete substitute for the vibrant campus experience that makes life at college and university so special. The benefits of technology can only be enjoyed if students, families and institutions can afford devices, connectivity and training.

HIGHER EDUCATION CHALLENGES

Modification levels notwithstanding, the higher education community shares many of the same risks regarding recovery and reopening. The Consortium, in partnership with District Government and under the advisement of DC Health, will make tailored plans for reopening on a campus-by-campus basis that address each of the core challenges below.

Residential Life on Campus

Schools with residential facilities face significant challenges related to containing the transmission of COVID-19. Colleges and universities will face many of the same issues as PK-12 schools along with additional required safety precautions given their residential populations, campus food service operations, and campus visitors. Additionally, individual movement on and off campus will make cohort and contact tracing more difficult as students, faculty and staff move on and about the campus daily for classes, study and recreation. Due to the nature of urban universities, both students and staff often travel and reside off campus, further complicating efforts to establish cohorts that do not intersect. As online learning continues in some capacity, online communities outside the virtual classroom can create a sense of connection that students would otherwise miss while not on campus. Leveraging students to create these communities would give a sense of ownership and ensure that these online communities are a reflection of the student body. Strengthening the alumni network may also provide resources for students to establish connections and receive additional support.

Travel

More than 95% of students enrolled at the area's private universities live outside of the District. A number of universities, including the public university, draw significant international populations of students and faculty. Specific reopening plans will be impacted by interstate and international travel restrictions and screening protocols, in addition to regional and local

transportation challenges. Students may also perceive air travel as unsafe due to the possibility of increased exposure. Each college and university that sits on the Consortium reopening task force is developing their own plan that is unique to their circumstances and student population. While these campus-specific plans are critical to match campus population needs, the committee recommends continuing to coordinate with the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, Transportation Security Administration, and local government agencies responsible for international and interstate travel to ensure they are aware of new screening requirements and monitoring the ongoing safety precautions being enforced during travel. The committee also recommends promoting virtual learning options as a safe, effective alternative to in-person campus learning for students who are unable to travel or feel unsafe doing so. Finally, the committee suggests citywide coordination to establish safety protocols for taxi and ridesharing drivers and enhanced regional coordination.

Financial Impact

The total financial impact of COVID-19 on the District as well as higher education institutions is still undetermined. Colleges and universities are facing the reality of reductions in all major funding sources, including endowments, tuition, room and board, athletics, fundraising, facility rentals, private donations, investment income, and federal and local funds. At the same time, the cost to operate will increase, including costs to provide supportive and safe environments for students and staff, potential increases to insurance and policy changes, and implementation of public health mandates including recommended social distancing guidelines and quarantine quarters. Costs may also increase due to rising levels of need-based aid, modified academic delivery and social-emotional supports. The shortfall may also mean that the current staffing levels cannot be maintained, leading to potential layoffs and further challenges around having an appropriate amount of staff to meet student needs. In order to mitigate some of the loss in revenue and anticipated higher costs, higher education institutions have been developing revenue models based on different utilization of student housing and costs of leasing additional housing. Many have also determined the distribution formula for CARES Act funds, including special costs for public health. The committee recommends continuing budget planning and making campus-based accommodations to support more virtual programming as an option to maintain enrollment.

Financial Aid

The pandemic will increase the challenges many students face in funding their education. Colleges and universities may feel pressured to increase tuition driven by enrollment revenue demands, while parents and students who must also hold a job to support tuition face an uncertain job market. Students on the economic margins will be challenged to remain enrolled. While also facing financial uncertainty due to lower revenues and higher costs, higher education institutions will face an increased need for student aid due to uncertainty around scholarship donations, endowment returns, and employment status of their students.

Institutions are working individually and through national associations to monitor and increase federal resources that may be available to students. Additional supports around efforts to increase federal grant aid and private donations is greatly needed. In order to address the financial impact, the committee also recommends continuing to disperse aid to students with the greatest need and find efficient methods of accessing and dispersing federal grant funds.

Liabilities

As described in the PK-12 section, there are liabilities that can be considered in reopening universities and colleges to resume on-campus learning and engagement before a vaccine is available, as well as the expectations and procedures should a student, teacher or staff member fall ill with COVID-19. Colleges and universities can also consider additional liabilities associated with the challenges around financial impact, lower student enrollment, human resource issues related to faculty tenure, and compounded issues of safety at the campus level that they will face during this pandemic. The committee recommends partnering with the city and others in the education space to align on cross-sector legal protection.

HIGHER EDUCATION REOPENING GUIDANCE

Regional coordination amongst the District, Maryland and Virginia governments is critical for higher education given that faculty, students, and staff live and work in all three jurisdictions. Each higher education institution is developing individualized plans for reopening based on their student population; campus, classroom, and office space configurations; and available resources. These reopening plans will comply with health and government directives.

At this time, the CDC has not released updated official guidance on colleges and universities. Given their multifaceted nature, institutions are currently reviewing sets of guidance across many domains as they outline scenarios for a safe reopening. This includes guidance pertaining to educational settings, cleaning, large gatherings, conferences and conventions, healthcare facilities, food service, and office spaces/workplaces. They are also working in partnership with other college associations including the NCAA to make final determinations on ways to safely support campus athletics for the future.

Institutions should approach reopening through a phased process that includes gradual changes to allow people back to campus and increased access to facilities over time. The committee currently recommends using the PK-12 guidance as a baseline and continuing to work with DC Health, campus vendors who have developed and released guidance, and the Consortium to develop more targeted mitigation plans that addresses the following areas of college life: residence hall safety and capacity standards, food service standards, isolation procedures, athletic events, conferences and convention center business, and workforce transition for faculty and staff. Detailed guidance that institutions can tailor to their communities will be key for a safe reopening.

Specifically, this might include the following:

- Capping in-person attendance for classes, lectures, and seminars to maintain six feet of distance between individuals.
- Reassigning classes to larger lecture halls to provide more space between learners.
- Utilizing partitions or dividers per DC Health specifications and review to create more opportunities to maximize space in large institution spaces including gyms, open student spaces, libraries, and other convention hall areas.
- Offering more online learning and enrichment opportunities.
- Following citywide guidance on mass gatherings and postponing large events, sports, dances, and performances.
- Limiting residential numbers to one student per room and limiting the number of students who can live in on-campus apartments or larger houses based on social distance guidance.
- Postponing residential options as a part of Greek life.
- Adding sanitation stations in common student spaces (e.g., student centers, libraries, and outdoor quads) to promote hand washing and use of hand sanitizer.
- Closing or restricting areas where students might congregate or where there are high-contact areas, such as fitness centers and student unions.
- Removing or locking computers in computer labs so that the remaining computers are at least six feet apart.
- Ensuring that seating at study tables in libraries is spaced out at least six feet apart.
- Reducing campus-based transportation services (shuttles, buses, etc.) to only those deemed most essential to reduce the transmission of germs.
- Having students and staff complete health screenings at the start of each day.
- Leveraging the robust health suites available on campus to assist with COVID-19 testing including serology testing for SARS-CoV-2.
- Rethinking meal delivery and staggering cafeteria times to limit the number of students in large dining spaces. Encouraging students to take meals outside the cafeteria and eat in their rooms or in outdoor spaces; discouraging sitting directly across from each other and space available seating at least six feet apart.

To develop the most thorough reopening plans for colleges and universities where students reside on campus, institutions will need more detailed direction and clarity from the CDC, and from DC Health and city officials on testing frequency, turnaround time for testing results, availability of testing materials (ideally for rapid testing and antibodies), plans for isolation

locations including options off campus, and direction on a safe return for in-person work opportunities.

As colleges and universities reopen, there may be challenges around identifying protocols for cleaning residence halls, classrooms, labs, offices, common areas, and sporting and recreational facilities. To aid in implementation, the committee recommends adopting guidance from the CDC and DC Health on cleaning protocols, enacting frequent cleaning systems, and working with the District to procure recommended PPE and cleaning supplies.

In the event that a student or staff member develops symptoms, isolation and quarantine rooms may also need to be set aside to protect the health and safety of the symptomatic individual and overall community.

Compliance with Guidance

Given the complex nature of these critical city institutions, and their “high” risk status according to the Johns Hopkins risk analysis above, the committee recommends the city consider reviewing individual university plans as part of its reopening protocols. This can be done in partnership with individual campuses or as a joint venture with the Consortium. The city can also explore ways to maintain ongoing reviews and coordination with campuses and their respective boards as the guidance evolves and as the local health landscape changes. The committee recommends that the city develop an accountability system that respects the unique needs and circumstances of each institution and creates regular connection points between DC Health and campuses. Institutions operate with community safety as a top priority – having coordinated compliance provides extra protection and thought partnership during each phase of reopening.

As higher education institutions pivot to online learning, universities may also need to ensure that any changes to course offerings comply with accreditation and licensure bodies and regulators. For some majors, licensing issues such as exam administration may need to be identified and remedied.

Innovations

A full-time or hybrid model of learning that includes online learning allows for additional creativity and innovation on college and university campuses. Faculty can be more flexible in their course offerings and schedules and may be able to reach a broader group of students. There is also the possibility that changes can be made to accreditation requirements so that they are inclusive of expanded distance learning, which may also expand a school’s reach to additional students.

Finally, universities have a wealth of talent, knowledge, and expertise at the student and faculty level. Campuses are filled with entrepreneurial individuals who have the passion and intellect to help society tackle the next big challenge. The committee recommends that the city consider how to use the talent on higher education campuses as a resource that can assist with idea

generation and direct support meeting our city's greatest needs in the health, business, and public safety arenas. Two examples for innovations to consider at the institution level include leveraging the expertise of the academic health community to contribute to national solutions and recruiting college students to support the city's overall contact tracing corps. Colleges and universities have strong research capabilities which can be harnessed to contribute to national solutions on the current global pandemic. Universities, including Johns Hopkins, are already playing a leading role in building our collective understanding of COVID-19. The city can continue to leverage the knowledge of institutions with strong epidemiology, public health programs, and/or medical schools to identify and collect best practices related to the structure of the virus, its impact on the body, the development of future vaccines, testing, contact tracing, and isolation. Continuing to foster and encourage this type of collaboration and innovation can provide tremendous benefits to residents locally, nationally, and across the globe. Additionally, the city can continue to support cross-sector collaboration between recent college graduates and students attending PK-12 schools who need additional academic support. By creating intentional partnerships between campus career centers and schools now, higher education institutions may be able to match recent graduates with critical school-based teaching and staff positions.

HIGHER EDUCATION PREPARATION AND RESOURCES NEEDED FOR REOPENING

Similar to the childcare and PK-12 sector, the city may consider opportunities for centralized procurement and distribution of PPE and cleaning supplies to mitigate costs. Having support with centralized procurement will ensure appropriate quantity and access to reliable, cost-effective products. Public institutions may consider providing PPE and cleaning supplies for faculty and students.

In terms of testing, the city can consider utilizing the university health centers as testing sites and additional capacity. The city can also consider classifying students attending District institutions of higher education as residents for the purposes of access to free testing.

HIGHER EDUCATION OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Local Transportation

A large percentage of students attending a District college or university travel either domestically or internationally to enroll. Schools also have a number of students who commute locally on a daily basis via public transportation. In order for students and staff to feel safe traveling to and from campus, the city can consider coordination with local and federal transportation agencies to implement health and safety measures for transportation routes.

Business Continuity

The transition to teleworking was challenging as was moving to online course delivery. Human resource rules required reexamination. Communications, both electronic and surface, had to be maintained. The security on empty campuses required considerations different from those filled with students. In order to reopen, universities can determine the optimal balance of on-campus and telework employees. Colleges and universities may also take into consideration the perceived safety of public transportation, as many employees require it to get to campus, as well as any personnel laws involved concerning work assignments.

OTHER EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

LIBRARIES

The residents of the District are passionate about their libraries. Last year's opinion survey conducted by the DC Auditor showed that 76% of residents rated the DC Public Library's (DCPL) services as "good" or "excellent" – the highest marks of any District Government agency. While its core work continues to be getting reading materials into the hands of residents, the library is relied upon to provide a variety of critical programs and services to many of the city's most vulnerable populations – young children, job seekers, seniors, returning citizens, and customers without homes. It is these vulnerable populations that rely most on the in-person services that DCPL provides, including 1,000+ computers, study spaces, printing/copying services, shelter, restrooms, and perhaps most fundamentally, a need for a safe and convivial space in which to connect and feel part of a community.

Insofar as the core work is concerned – providing books and other materials for residents of all ages – the pandemic may serve to accelerate a trend that libraries have been experiencing for years. Increases in the circulation of library materials are largely due to increases in the use of electronic books, streaming video, and other content that the library licenses on behalf of residents. In the first seven weeks of the stay-at-home order, 7,000 residents borrowed an electronic book for the first time. A greater investment in electronic material, which tends to be significantly more expensive than print material, will be required to meet increased demand. It bears mentioning that the digital divide plays a role here too in terms of access to library content. While many residents enjoy the convenience of direct-to-device delivery of books, other residents, especially in low-income areas of the city, may not have the same level of access to electronic content.

Current Status of Library Services

Since closing its doors on March 16, DCPL has transitioned to a virtual service delivery model and has experienced massive increases in the circulation of electronic books, streaming films, and more. The library has created a one-stop shop for virtual programs, collections, and

services and has organized it under a new web page called “The Library at Home.” Customers can find pre-recorded story times for children birth to 3 years of age, various STEAM programs and classes for children of all ages, DC Reads programming, and various book clubs and classes aimed at adults. DCPL also offers story times on Facebook Live throughout the week. The library will continue to expand programming for children, families and adults throughout the current public health emergency and maintain it once stay-at-home orders are relaxed.

DCPL has expanded access to its digital collection GoDigital, including Overdrive, Lynda.com, ABC Mouse, Gale Databases, and many more great resources for ebooks, online learning, and school and research resources. As a result of the “Get a Library Card” campaign, 5,042 DC residents have signed up for new library accounts since March 13. In April, the library launched a new service called AskDCPL so customers can keep in touch with the library via chat. A similar phone service is scheduled to open to customers mid-May. Both services will continue once stay-at-home orders are relaxed.

This summer, DCPL’s Summer Challenge will be held virtually. Summer Challenge is an ongoing campaign to encourage students and families to read 20 minutes every day from June 1 through August 31, 2020.

While library programming is available to all, customers need a library card to access parts of the digital collection. To ensure library access to as many customers as possible, DCPL reinstated the last three years’ worth of cards that had expired, extended privileges of cards that were blocked due to fines or about to expire, and extended the temporary card privileges indefinitely. Unfortunately, the digital divide that continues to disadvantage low-income communities speaks to the urgent need for libraries to reopen and provide in-person access to technology. Furthermore, the digital skills divide suggests that beyond providing access, libraries may need to continue to focus their efforts on providing training and otherwise helping residents with the navigation of vast amounts of online content.

Community Engagement

The committee has explored the ways that the library continues to connect with residents throughout the public health emergency to understand and respond to their needs. Through weekly newsletters to more than 200,000 people, social media engagement, and regular interactions with Library Friends groups, DCPL shares programming and shares updates with the community. From March 13 to May 5, the library hosted 151 virtual programs attracting 15,749 participants. In addition to these online channels, the library will launch a customer survey to understand customer needs and expectations for the near future. The committee recommends that this information be used to inform future reopening planning.

Prioritization and Phasing

Public libraries have embraced an “all things to all people” service model and that model is the main reason they are loved and so well used. At the same time, because so many people use

them who have few other options, enforcing social distancing and limiting the number of individuals who can enter the buildings at any given time may create challenges. Ensuring staff and customer safety will need to be the library's main priority upon reopening.

The committee recommends a phased approach to reopening DCPL's 25 neighborhood libraries. To provide residents with access to library materials, DCPL could start phase 1 by offering curbside pickup at limited locations with an increase as conditions permit. This would bring some staff back into the building to support this effort and provide residents with a valuable and much-loved service in phase 1.

In phase 2, the committee recommends expanding the number of locations offering curbside services, followed by a gradual opening of branches for limited in person services including the opportunity for customers to return books, pick up items they have reserved, retrieve printouts from the library printers and other approved facility-based services. Based on guidance from DC Health, the library may also be able to bring on additional services including use of a limited number of computers, print/copy jobs, and possibly browse for books and use the restrooms. Social distancing guidelines will determine capacity for these services.

In the third phase, the library can seek to safely increase the number of computers made available to customers, along with opening the remaining branches and increasing in person services including seating areas for customers, use of reconfigured reading rooms with six feet of space between occupants and the use of study rooms. The third phase may occur under the low restrictions posture.

Throughout the phased remobilization plan, the committee recommends that DCPL make every effort to fulfill its mission to be open to all residents. However, the need to safely manage physical access to library buildings may require a unique approach – especially during the initial moderate restriction phase – which would prioritize access to students and other populations, through the creation of "Learning Hubs". In any scenario, staff training will be paramount to successfully monitor and appropriately correct behaviors that run contrary to the social distancing guidelines library staff will be expected to enforce.

Library Opportunities and Core Recommendations

While the library serves residents of all ages and stages of life, the committee recognizes there are opportunities for it to be more intentional in placing special emphasis on the needs of groups that have been especially impacted by the pandemic. By reopening carefully and safely, and by listening to residents as they articulate what they now most need from city agencies, DCPL can resume its role as a valued and trusted community anchor.

Libraries can potentially play an important role in providing students access to spaces to study and work, especially during the coming summer months.

Many students are challenged to find the appropriate spaces that are conducive to productivity. Through the launch of learning hubs, libraries may help provide focus, eliminate distractions, and offer other types of support as required.

Libraries can provide resources to job seekers to help prepare them for workforce reentry.

Beyond the access to computers, WiFi, printing and copying, libraries have resources to help with the filing of unemployment claims, software programs to help residents take assessments, learn new skills, and receive certifications. The library can consider experimenting – especially in the early stages of reopening – with special service hours for job seekers or identifying specific libraries in low-income areas as those that may place special emphasis on workforce development.

The large and centrally located Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Library could serve as an ideal location for addressing the needs of populations hit hardest by the pandemic.

While the need for ongoing social distancing measures will restrict unlimited access to the neighborhood libraries, the MLK Library can be available to residents for most if not all of Fiscal Year 2021 and can serve as a destination center for a variety of services related to pandemic response.

In times of economic recession and uncertainty, people rely on the free services of public libraries in ever greater numbers. Reconciling demand for library services with the altered landscape of ongoing public health restrictions may be a daily challenge for DCPL. As the city embarks on a phased reopening of neighborhood libraries, the library can consider focusing on the maintenance and growth of its online options while working collaboratively with other city agencies to address the needs of our most vulnerable residents. The committee recommends that the library remain focused on the impact that the digital divide will have on who can most benefit from their services and strive to prioritize the needs of those with zero or limited connectivity.

ADULT SCHOOLS

Adult education is a key component of ensuring equity in opportunity for all DC residents, regardless of language spoken, educational background, or literacy level. In School Year 2019-2020, adult schools – both public charter and DCPS – served nearly 5,000 adult learners from all eight wards of the District, not including the nine OSSE-funded CBOs that offer Integrated Education and Training to approximately 700 adult learners a year. As a result of the educational opportunities provided by the District’s adult education schools, thousands of economically disadvantaged District residents have acquired the skills they need to gain employment in high-demand sectors, including healthcare, education, childcare, construction, hospitality, and IT support.

Adult schools are focused on actively closing the equity and opportunity gap within our city not only through their work with some of the District's most vulnerable student populations, but also through the well-researched connection between a child's academic success and their parents' literacy levels. This connection becomes even more critical in a time when our PK-12 system is engaging in distance education and relying on parents to help their children navigate technology platforms for online instruction and the corresponding assignments. During the COVID-19 public health crisis, adult schools are a critical resource for the District's low-income, high-potential adult learner communities and provide foundational support for our neediest families and communities.

Adult Schools Opportunities and Core Recommendations

Inclusive communication and greater coordination with PK-12 schools and city agencies will help adult learners prepare for continued distance learning.

Simplified and accessible messaging on reopening decisions and instructions is crucial. The committee recommends that adult schools consider using videos and audio messages in addition to written communications to accommodate diverse literacy levels. Sending these communications through commonly used media outlets and collaborating with CBOs and adult schools that are trusted community hubs can amplify important messages and engender trust in reopening decisions for all schools.

Additionally, over the summer and fall of 2020, adult learners and parents may need targeted technology training to aid in their own online learning and their children's online learning. This can include coordination with PK-12 schools on student and parent distance learning needs and the development of a series of how-to videos or cable TV programming, internet safety best practices, Microsoft Teams support, Parent Town Hall guidance, and a Parent Summer Boot Camp to provide broad support for online learning.

Partnerships between city agencies and adult schools play an important role in recovery.

Adult education programs provide training in fields that are currently in high demand, such as IT and healthcare, and can nimbly pivot to emerging needs such as contact tracers. The committee recommends that adult schools, the District, and DC Health collaborate on which fields are essential to recovery and reopening and consider expediting credentialing in these programs (e.g., healthcare certifications, IT credentials, and Childhood Development Associate certifications). There is also opportunity for technology-focused adult programs and PK-12 schools to partner together and provide training to parents to aid in distance learning for their children.

Adult Schools Lessons Learned During Stay-at-Home

Adult learners remain highly motivated to continue their studies in spite of the numerous barriers they face, including childcare, unemployment, physical and mental health needs, and the digital divide. Approximately 50% of the District's Adult Basic Education (ABE) learners are

parents of school-aged children, and nearly 90% of ABE students and adult English learners fall below the poverty line. Adult learners gain essential skills (reading, writing, how to apply for and gain employment, financial literacy, how to make doctors' appointments, how to engage with their children's teachers) and credentials (high school diploma, nurse aide certification, bilingual paraeducator certification, IT certifications, and CDA childcare certification). During this crisis, many adult learners have remained committed to their programs of study, some while also navigating the at-home, online learning of their children in addition to their own.

The digital divide is not restricted to PK-12 students; many public school adult learners in the District struggle with device and internet access. Adult students' challenges can be even greater than PK-12 students as some adult students also lack the basic digital literacy skills to complete their online learning. Also, as adult schools move to online certification tests, the technology specifications for learning devices become more stringent, such as the requirement for remote proctoring software. Based on a survey by DC PCSB conducted in April 2020, adult public charter schools are in the process of distributing approximately 1,300 learning devices (either from the schools' inventory or new purchases), resulting in a gap of almost 300 adult public charter students who still need devices. Further, nearly 60% of adult learners lack reliable internet access at home. Currently, adult public charter schools are in the process of distributing approximately 160 MiFi devices to students, leaving almost 2,100 adult charter school students without reliable access to the internet. The committee recommends that adult education schools explore the solutions outlined in the PK-12 section toward closing the digital divide for our adult learners.

Adult Schools Challenges

Adult learners face extraordinary challenges to meet basic needs at this time. Adult learners, along with their families, are among the District's most vulnerable and disadvantaged populations. They may be coping with lack of childcare, loss of income, loss of employment, food insecurity, immigration issues, physical and mental health challenges, violence in the community, and risk of exposure, and are at a great risk of falling further behind due to the digital divide and the digital literacy divide. It will be difficult for adult students to return to school until their children are in school, as they often do not have access to alternative childcare options.

Because adult programs enroll students all year and are not compulsory, adult schools may face increased challenges related to fluctuating enrollment. As schools reopen, chronic health conditions and overall fears may lead to decreased enrollment in the fall followed by a significant increase later in the year as the crisis stabilizes and as fears abate. Similar fluctuations in adult enrollment have occurred during past economic recessions.

The standard operations of adult education schools pose additional challenges to distance education and enhanced cleaning procedures. Several industry-specific training programs require hands-on instruction with the appropriate tools and equipment. These programs will be

more difficult to adapt to a distance learning model. Adult school schedules may also pose a problem with the frequency of cleaning required. Adult schools aim to accommodate learners who are parents and those who are in the workforce; therefore, classes are often offered during three shifts - morning, afternoon, and evening - and on weekends. This has implications for cleaning swiftly and thoroughly between cohorts.

Adult learners are often older and have underlying health conditions that put them at greater risk for COVID-19. This may make them more concerned about accessing public transportation and attending school in person. Many key resources, including mental health services and public transportation, may also be harder to access during evening and weekend hours.

Adult Schools Reopening Guidance

Similar to the reopening guidance for PK-12 schools, the committee recommends that adult schools reopen in a phased approach with alternating schedules for students. Collaboration with PK-12 schools will allow adult learners to coordinate their schedules with their children's learning schedules. Adult schools can prioritize students who are unable to effectively access distance education based on their low levels of literacy and/or digital literacy, and those students enrolled in workforce programs that require in-classroom instruction. Adult students that have an underlying medical condition that puts them at high-risk should continue with distance learning.³⁶

Given that many adult students are over 40 years of age and may fall into high-risk categories, adult schools might also benefit from additional public health recommendations from DC Health and additional support regarding reopening practices, including training for adult school personnel on implementation of DC Health guidelines. Social distancing guidelines and enhanced health protocols in adult schools can follow the PK-12 guidance outlined above.

OUT OF SCHOOL TIME

Out-of-School-Time (OST) programs are structured activities that include after-school, summer programs and camps, enrichment programs, and sports that occur outside the school day. OST is a critical sector to include in the reopening plans as OST plays an essential role in the ecosystem in making sure the city's children and youth have access to caring adults and develop positive peer relationships outside the school day.

Since March, the resilient and adaptive OST sector, composed primarily of non-profits, has continued to work across the District in new, creative and innovative ways. These non-profits have changed services during the pandemic by delivering meals, dropping off creative kits and program supplies, connecting with parents more often to support learning from home, and

³⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission (Appendix A). <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community-mitigation-strategy.pdf>.

delivering content via private YouTube channels, podcasts, virtual tours, and apps. The primary focus for OST is beyond the delivery of content and focuses on the relationship between the adult and the participant. These relationships position OST to strengthen and support participants in coping during this crisis and to support the reduction of academic learning loss.

Community Engagement

The committee has explored the ways that OST providers can continue to connect with residents throughout the public health emergency and offer valuable learning, enrichment, and social-emotional support to youth. The Office on Out of School Time Grants and Youth Outcomes (OST Office) has continued to distribute the DME Bulletin to CBOs and to provide critical COVID-19 updates to the community of leaders, teachers, tutors and providers through a biweekly newsletter. Additionally, the District has stayed connected to the OST educator community through virtual training modules, which help providers strengthen their skills in the areas of youth development, program planning, and reflection. Since March 2020, there have been 367 individuals engaged in these virtual offerings. The OST Office has held several conference calls, which occur on biweekly basis, with 89 OST grantees about the grant and services. Grantee input informed recommendations for the OST section of this report and directly reflects the themes (sustainability, enrollment/attendance, quality of OST programming, etc.) captured in the challenges section.

Out of School Time Opportunities and Core Recommendations

To meet the needs of students, particularly as students are facing increased challenges including trauma and learning loss, OST providers have an opportunity to fill key gaps and support students' academic and social-emotional wellbeing.

Leverage relationships to support mental health

The relationships between the OST program and participants should be optimized to support the coping skills needed to reduce the trauma caused by COVID-19. Students are facing increased mental health challenges that OST providers could address through targeted mental health supports and social-emotional learning.

Leverage resources to focus on one core academic (literacy)

OST providers can supplement distance learning and combat summer learning loss exacerbated by COVID-19 by including academic-focused content into the OST programming. Literacy is one specific academic area that OST providers can target to support by building knowledge of site word, increase fluency, build endurance, or utilize the DCPL Summer Challenge program.

Provide creative content, project-based sessions, or gamification of programming

Through creative programming, OST providers can engage students in new ways to deliver effective content that supports their social-emotional growth. The concept of gamification can be used to create scaffold sessions while infusing incentives as skills are developed.

Focus on skill mastery in both remote and in-person delivery

As OST providers have pivoted to provide content remotely, their reach has increased. However, OST can utilize this opportunity to focus on mastery of skill by implementing new feedback loops. This individualized attention to students with a focus on mastery could profoundly increase students' academic and social-emotional growth.

Out of School Time Challenges

Non-profits and CBOs focused on OST face a number of challenges, including:

Organizations are evaluating sustainability concerns and grant expenditures. Several non-profits have expressed concerns with the inability to pay for operating costs, including rent, utilities, non-program personnel, etc. The closure of non-essential business resulted in closures of non-profits that are not licensed as childcare centers. As a result, several of these non-profits lost revenue through lack of the fee-for-service, space rental, and other revenue generation methods. This has led non-profits to be concerned about their sustainability. Non-profits are requesting flexibility with government grant funds to support operations.

The remote delivery model has led to challenges in the quality of OST programs. The challenge to deliver content in a remote environment has led non-profits to quickly activate, create, and innovate. However, the quality has varied as different skills, knowledge, and content were modified into an online format.

It has become more difficult for programs to define enrollment. Virtual learning increases accessibility and many module-based, asynchronous formats will allow content to be shared broadly. However, it creates a challenge in tracking users and when users complete the module without a software platform. The software platforms available are difficult to evaluate and non-profits tend to use free platforms like YouTube, Google, and other low-cost methods. The non-profits are now challenged with defining enrollment and engagement in different ways, which can impact a grant that is predicated on reaching a specific number of students.

Out of School Time Reopening Guidance

The broad content of OST programs and types of activities in the OST sector is complex and a number of considerations for reopening must be taken into account. Using the recommendations on how schools reopen is a good foundation for several non-profits while others may need the following considerations:

- **Dependency on schools and public buildings to deliver programs:** Several non-profits utilize schools, parks and recreation centers, libraries, and other public buildings to offer OST programs. As decisions are made about the schedule, there is a need to consider

how access to public buildings will be made to non-profits. Non-profits may want to consider outdoor venues, outdoor classrooms when weather permits, and other safe places to offer programming that may not be reliant on public buildings. The committee recommends that non-profits that have their own facilities or rent space consider implementing the social distancing and cleaning recommendations for schools.

- **Continue to modify programming for in-person, small, targeted groups:** The committee encourages non-profits to consider how in-person programs are designed to maintain social distancing for students. These considerations may include student age, grade level, family unit, geography, and access to technology.
- **Modify the delivery of sports, field trips, overnight camps and outdoor group activities:** The committee recommends providers modify and deliver programming differently to limit physical contact and reduce transportation to such activities. Sports may consider individual equipment for each student and keeping partners the same for each session. Outdoor activities may need to be limited to locations within walking distance to reduce the need to travel by public transportation or rented shuttle service. The American Camp Association is working on guidance that providers can consult.

CITYWIDE INTERDEPENDENCIES AND COORDINATION IMPERATIVES

As childcare centers, PK-12 schools, higher education institutions, and libraries across the District face similar challenges, there is an opportunity for the city to provide streamlined support that will ensure consistent experiences and access to resources. At each phase and across priority areas, the city can consider appropriate metrics to monitor implementation and adjust the approach as needed.

SCHEDULE COORDINATION ACROSS SECTORS

Across stakeholder groups, a desire for stability came across loud and clear. Families, teachers and school leaders all expressed a desire for plans that promote as much consistency and stability as possible in a world of great uncertainty. To this end, the committee strongly recommends that public schools across the District consider adopting a shared, uniform schedule for the upcoming school year, developed based on input from families. The recommendation of a shared schedule assumes a split schedule, in the eventuality that schools cannot provide in-person learning for all their students all at once and must divide students into cohorts. In this circumstance, the committee believes that families could benefit from a similar schedule across all schools, particularly those that have students in multiple schools and LEAs.

As importantly, such a shared school schedule could become an even more powerful anchor of stability if employers signed on. Families whose adults must be at work in person could then coordinate their work schedule with their children's school schedule (e.g., they could become an "A day/week" or "B day/week" family). To this end, the committee recommends that the city and its education cluster engage with the Chamber of Commerce, the Federal City Council, and the Greater Washington Partnership, as well as trade associations, to develop a shared understanding of the need for and benefits of a shared schedule, as well as to explore what kinds of schedules might work across sectors.

Lastly, such alignment on schedules could support a coordinated approach to transportation as a way of regulating the demand on WMATA buses and trains, for example (see Transportation Coordination section below).

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS LEARNING AT HOME

In the best of cases, the District will determine how to provide in-person instruction for most of our students in safe and healthy environments. The city must plan and prepare for this. Given the number of uncertainties, however, the city must also plan and prepare for a more challenging scenario: that many or most of our students continue their learning at home on a part- or full-time basis.

This latter scenario suggests an important role for all sectors of the city, including government, non-profits, and the business community (and particularly employers across all three sectors) as we collectively work to mitigate the disruption caused when parents and guardians and other caregivers need to return to work in person – for the sake of their livelihoods, and for the sake of the city's economy – but their children cannot be in childcare or school.

The coordination on this would be complex, but the committee believes it will be important. Coordinated support could include several approaches, each imperfect, but each requiring careful consideration and further development by the city.

First, government agencies and non-profit and private sector entities could come together to provide safe learning hubs for students to work in, and be chaperoned, while their families are at work. These learning hubs could be libraries, for example, or recreation centers, or meeting spaces in community centers or office buildings. In each case, there would need to be strict adherence to DC Health safety protocols, internet access, a meal, and adult supervisors with appropriate background checks. In particular, the committee strongly encourages employers across all sectors to consider the provision of such childcare for their workers who must be in person.

Second, city government in close collaboration with DC Health could consider creating clear guidance for families that want to engage in shared childcare responsibilities based on a co-op model. Such guidance would need to include, at a minimum, the requirement for such co-ops

to minimize cohort-mixing (i.e., to preference small groups of children who are already in school together).

Apart from this critical need for families returning to work in person, additional support for students learning at home will involve resolving the digital divide as a top priority. Here, again, the potential of a shared solution across government and the private sector is vital, including reduced-cost procurements, donated funds and equipment, shared innovations, etc. (See the Internet Access section.)

OPERATIONS AND PROCUREMENT COORDINATION

There are many places where city-driven coordinated procurement may increase buying power and capitalize on economies of scale. Additionally, bulk purchases can help with some of the current supply chain issues cities and states are facing. Procurement for critical items, including PPE and specialized contracts for cleaning, can be coordinated at the District level, while other items like devices and software licenses may be best suited for LEAs to lead.

Meal service and grocery delivery has been a critical service offered by both the charter school and DCPS communities since the pandemic began. The committee recommends continuing meal service and grocery delivery in a similar fashion, serving the city at large, until the orange phase (summer 2020) begins. At that time and for the remainder of the school year, the city may need to make coordinated changes to ensure participating students and families can access breakfast, lunch, and snacks while finding new locations for residents who continue to need meals. LEAs can continue to coordinate grab and go meals in central locations. The committee recommends these meals remain available to all school-age students. There may also be opportunities for increased operational coordination related to IT services, finance, and across the supply chain.

TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION

The city can coordinate closely with DDOT and WMATA around students and families who are commuting across the District. This could include coordinating transportation timing and capacity to coincide with student and family travel patterns and arrival times. This could also include the allocation of dedicated space on transportation routes for students commuting to and from school. For more information, review the Transportation section.

STUDENT SAFETY

The committee recognizes that beyond their responsibilities as learning institutions, schools keep students safe by engaging them in daily programming. Through the Safe Passage program, student safety is already a point of coordination across the city, and the committee recommends it continue to be a priority as schools navigate the transition back to school. By working with the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement and MPD, along with the DME and LEAs, the city can prioritize ensuring that students travel to and from school safely and are

engaged during the school day whether they are learning in the classroom or at home. The city can place particular emphasis on youth who are at risk of disengaging and disconnecting due to the present circumstances and can collaborate to implement creative solutions to remain connected to youth virtually. There are many opportunities to provide targeted summer enrichment and employment options to engage students reduce unsafe activity.

FACILITY USAGE

In order to implement appropriate social distancing, LEAs may require additional facility capacity, which might be provided through other city buildings, libraries, and DPR centers. If student demand varies significantly across schools, an analysis of citywide facility capacity could demonstrate ways to optimize facility use by shifting grade levels to a different school building or by sharing space across LEAs.

WORKFORCE COORDINATION

The committee recommends that the city coordinate closely with neighboring jurisdictions on the reopening of schools and childcare facilities, so that educators are able to return to work. Along with childcare facilities that serve essential workers, the city can coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions and childcare providers to prioritize childcare for educators (among other priority groups) who otherwise will be unable to return to the classroom. When educators return to work, the District may require an expanded pool of qualified substitute teachers and may be best served by a District-wide, shared substitute pool rather than one segmented by LEAs.

For staff engaged in remote work, the city can create avenues for educators to serve students and families beyond their LEA, particularly when creating resources that can be widely distributed and in times of surging demand for specific communities. This could include virtual learning resources or mental health supports for students.

REMOTE LEARNING COORDINATION

The city can consider establishing a remote learning center of excellence for all LEAs to ensure consistent and high-quality remote learning experiences for all students and families. To provide universal access to accurate and timely guidance, the city can coordinate the creation of training modules for staff, students, and parents on COVID-19 risk factors and protective behaviors as schools begin to reopen. Feedback from educators has demonstrated an increased need for professional development targeted toward delivering remote instruction. LEAs can collaborate to create high-quality professional learning experiences that are available to educators across LEAs. This increased atmosphere of collaboration provides an opportunity for additional cooperation across LEAs toward the goal of targeted and effective professional development for teachers that results in high-quality in-person and remote learning experiences for all students. Because remote learning is also being implemented at the post-

secondary level, this can also be an opportunity for PK-12 schools and higher education institution to collaborate on best practices.

CAREER-TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

The city can prioritize coordination and funding for programming that provides virtual internships, employment, and career-focused training to young people, particularly Opportunity Youth. As young people compete for employment opportunities with adults in a more challenging job market, these career skills and training opportunities are essential to ensure that students stay connected to education and are prepared for future career success. This can also be an important area of coordination between PK-12 schools, alternative and adult schools, CBOs, higher education institutions, and citywide agencies including DOES.

FAMILY SUPPORT COORDINATION

Learning institutions are a critical way for city government to interact with the community and to ensure that families have access to essential resources and services. The committee recommends the District view learning institutions as a key lever for connecting families to resources and create streamlined ways to communicate information through educational facilities. PK-12 schools already serve as hubs for food distribution at this time, and the city can consider other forms of service delivery that can take place based on the relationships that schools have built with families. Supports can focus on families furthest from opportunity, including those who are undocumented, with limited English proficiency, and are facing multiple challenges including homelessness and unemployment. For the model of integrating services into the school program, the city can look to LEAs that have implemented a community schools model. Through a community schools model, schools become a resource hub in the community that is designed to meet families' needs inside and outside of the classroom. This whole-child and whole-family approach can help ensure that students are ready to learn and that families have the support they need to return to in-person learning.

SUPPORT FOR GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

The committee recommends that schools support graduating seniors as much as possible, including encouraging application to college or certificate programs and ensuring that each graduating senior completes the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. LEAs and higher education institutions can also consider organizing a meeting between high school counselors and higher education admissions officers to explore local higher education opportunities for graduating seniors.

COMMUNICATIONS

Effective communication during a crisis requires that timely, consistent, and relevant messages are delivered by trusted, credible messengers. A family survey fielded by PAVE showed District

families turned to Mayor Bowser and the Bowser Administration during this crisis with 52% of respondents reporting the Mayor's coronavirus (COVID-19) website as their primary source of information.³⁷ Facebook (45%) and their child's school (44%) were the other most reported sources of information for families. This data tells us what we already know — in times of uncertainty, residents turn to trusted and familiar institutions for guidance.

CHALLENGES

Communication and critical messaging from Mayor Bowser and District Government have been consistent and clear throughout this emergency. Where possible, Mayor Bowser and her team have made determinations reflective of strong relationships within the education sector, a reliance on the best available data, and a deep understanding of the needs of residents in all eight wards. For some, however, incremental closures along with perceived contradictions and abruptness felt within the charter sector have engendered a degree of confusion and frustration.

Just as this public health emergency has highlighted disparities in our community, it has also demonstrated the importance of varied methods of information delivery. With widely ranging levels of engagement and connectivity, ongoing efforts to reach stakeholders through differentiated methods must continue and expand. Likewise, empowering school and community leaders with the tools necessary to meet residents in varying ways can ensure the highest possible awareness of critical public health and school-related information.

COMMUNICATING DURING RECOVERY

For the foreseeable future, the District will remain in a crisis communications posture. Mayor Bowser and District Government can continue to be a trusted, reliable messenger to support schools and families. To maintain this position, the city can continue its efforts to provide clear, consistent, ongoing communication with families. The city can also engage with and thoughtfully incorporate stakeholder feedback and concerns into messaging and service delivery.

LEVERAGING PARTNERS

³⁷ Parents Amplifying Voices in Education. 2020. "Coronavirus Parent Impact Survey Results." https://www.dropbox.com/s/ne8w7hbyqs6e2wp/COVID-19%20Parent%20Impact%20Survey%20Results_FINAL2.pdf?dl=0&utm_source=PAVE+Post+Newsletter&utm_campaign=bd9d989b5e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_05_10_08_35_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_9e3f65df2d-bd9d989b5e-102283499.

Our public schools can be leveraged as distribution points for vital information to families, staff, and the wider school community. In addition to their family survey, PAVE collected feedback from school leaders who reported relying heavily on materials from the Executive Office of the Mayor and District agencies to inform families. Particularly as school buildings reopen, the committee recommends providing school leaders with thoughtful, complete, and easily - accessible communications tools for distribution to their stakeholders. The importance of leveraging school infrastructures to communicate with families is echoed in CDC guidance and the American Federation of Teachers report, “A Plan to Reopen America’s Schools and Communities.”³⁸

DCPS and many of the larger charter LEAs have the capacity to develop and utilize a variety of communications tools for their school leaders to share with families. As rules, policies, and practices for school reopening are solidified, the city can create shared citywide communications materials to support schools in communicating with families, students, and staff.

Beyond the schedules and the logistics of what a new “typical” school day may look like, the city should also seek to utilize schools as distribution centers for information on health, city services, and available resources in support of broader public health efforts. Moving forward, this will be an opportunity to “[s]hare clear, concise and accurate information about COVID-19, normalize messages about fear and anxiety and promote self-care strategies not only for students and their families but also teachers and other school staff.”³⁹

SHARED DECISIONMAKING, SINGLE SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Understandably, both families and school leaders have felt a great deal of anxiety during this experience. Given the District’s standard of transparency and cultural expectation of the inclusion of stakeholder voice in decisionmaking processes, the rapidly changing nature of the crisis has been troubling for some.

Many community members have expressed fear and anxiety over reopening schools before a vaccine is developed and available at a large scale. Engaging them in the process and decision-making can establish stakeholder trust in reopening plans and will create a feeling of empowerment.⁴⁰ As the city transitions towards reopening, every effort can be made to include the opportunity for broad stakeholder feedback as well as clear recognition of where and how

³⁸ American Federation of Teachers. 2020. A Plan to Reopen America’s Schools and Communities.

https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/covid19_reopen-america-schools.pdf.

³⁹ UNICEF. 2020 “Framework for Reopening Schools. <https://www.unicef.org/media/68366/file/Framework-for-reopening-schools-2020.pdf>.

⁴⁰ American Federation of Teachers. 2020. A Plan to Reopen America’s Schools and Communities.

https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/covid19_reopen-america-schools.pdf.

stakeholder feedback has been incorporated. Clear communication of where and why stakeholder feedback has not been included is equally important.

Multiple stakeholders, including the Senior High Alliance for Parents, Principals, and Educators, have expressed their desire for a more defined system of communications and rules that apply across the District's public education system. While respecting the autonomy of the charter sector regarding scheduling and other aspects of instructional delivery, the uncertainty of the current public health situation is an opportunity for centralized coordination along with clearly defined rules and expectations for safely reopening our schools. To ensure continuity and clarity for the wide range of stakeholders and community members represented across and within sectors, both decisions themselves and the communication thereof can be unified and uniform across the entirety of the District's 63 LEAs.

CITYWIDE COMMUNICATIONS COLLATERAL

As school buildings reopen, much will be asked of administrators and other school-based professionals. In addition to managing a modified school and classroom environment, stakeholders will look to schools as sources of information on a variety of issues. Providing ready-to-use communications collateral and templates for communications with families can support overall efforts to share timely, critical information with stakeholders.

Templates – to include various communications tools schools may need in the event of positive cases presenting in their communities, building closures, etc.:

- Family/staff notification of a positive COVID-19 diagnosis
- Family/staff notification of school closure resulting from a positive COVID-19 diagnosis
- Social media language for closures

Operational Communications Collateral – to include general family-facing information on changes students and families will experience in their school communities:

- Family-facing “What to Expect at School” infographic (student travel, entry/exit procedures, school day/schedule changes, cleaning protocols, PPE requirements/issuance, and changes to physical space)
- Basic guidance on when a school may close due to potential exposure
- Directional signs
- Hygiene and symptom graphics

Process-Related Communications Collateral – to include school leader-focused guidance on operational decision-making processes:

- “Who to call if...” graphic
- Closure matrix

Miscellaneous Resources – to include general District-provided resources and guidance on COVID-19-related issues:

- Testing
- Symptoms
- Food/meals resources
- Anti-stigma
- Mental Health
- Health Insurance
- Vaccines

Policy Information – to include both school leader and family-focused information on new/temporary policies resulting from and in response to COVID-19:

- Attendance
- Grading
- Extracurriculars

ESTABLISHING STANDARDIZED CLOSURE PROCESSES AND NOTIFICATIONS

At the onset of the current public health emergency, the DME established an impermanent process for schools to receive guidance on the potential need for school closures. Moving forward, decisionmaking around school closures due to health and safety concerns should be managed and informed by public health professionals at DC Health.

PRIORITIZED WORK FOR THE FUTURE

The recommendations provided by the committee are in service of the goal articulated in the opening of this report: providing every student in the District with a high-quality education that meets their academic and social-emotional needs within an environment that prioritizes the health and safety of all students, educators and families. While the report reflects extensive research and engagement, we see this as the foundation for reopening and the first of many steps on the path to recovery. The coming weeks, months and years will be filled with new challenges, changes, learnings and opportunities. The committee recommends that the city prioritize the following actions in the next phase of reopening and recovery to build on the opportunities, recommendations, and information provided in this report:

- **Continue stakeholder engagement and shared decisionmaking** with the community on practical elements of the reopening plan, including feedback on preferred school

schedules, calendars, coordination on transportation and workforce requirements, and what families need to support ongoing virtual learning pathways.

- Engage with families on preferred shift schedules, and work to develop **coordinated schedules and calendars across all schools**; engage with the Chamber of Commerce, the Federal City Council, Greater Washington Partnership and trade associations to test and promote coordination on a shared schedule with schools.
- Provide **WMATA** with best estimates for student demand by day and time to encourage the best possible transit operations for schools.
- Implement a set of solutions that **bridge the digital divide**, focusing on families in vulnerable communities first. This is a critical and equity-driven strategy to level the playing field for all learners. Investing in access to devices and the internet will have immediate and long-term benefits. These solutions can be a hybrid of providing families with WiFi hotspot devices, coordinating with providers to reduce or cover fixed broadband costs, positioning mobile WiFi buses in select locations, and exploring a targeted expansion of the District's free public WiFi network. The city can consider identifying a lead for coordination across the public sector, private industry, and philanthropy to meet this need.
- Utilize the summer to provide **training to teachers (and parents)** on the most effective ways to use virtual learning platforms, programs, and tools. Consider launching a "remote learning center of excellence."
- Explore the idea of encouraging or providing a shared **no-stakes diagnostic** tool for the late summer or early fall across all LEAs to better understand the scale of the city's collective learning challenge.
- Work with schools, libraries, DPR, CBOs, and members of the business community to develop **strong learning hubs** that provide safe, internet-connected space along with meals and coverage by adults with background checks.
- **Center planning around vulnerable student populations, including special populations, students in traditionally underserved communities, and those most at risk of disconnecting or falling behind.** Streamline communications, prioritize consistent, timely translation services, and create strong modifications and accommodations to support students with diverse learning needs.
- Work with DC Health to create more **sector-specific health and safety guidance** for libraries, higher education institutions, and other educational settings.
- Build **robust health capacity** within each of the educational spaces to assess community health; monitor health conditions at schools, centers, and institutions; and coordinate communications and recommended action steps in the event of an outbreak. The health capacity should include clear roles and responsibilities, lines of reporting and accountability, and communications protocols that can be easily activated.

- **Leverage student health centers on college and university campuses** to serve as the main primary care entity for the 90,000+ students and community members; equip them with the necessary testing kits, safety equipment, and contact tracing guidelines needed to be a true extension of the citywide healthcare system and reduce potential strain on other facilities.

RESEARCH, RESOURCES, AND REFERENCES

Since the formation of the ReOpen DC Advisory Committee by Mayor Bowser and her administration, the Education and Childcare Committee has worked to collect as many resources as possible from a variety of sources.

The committee embarked on a substantial effort to ensure community engagement prior to and during the drafting of this report by connecting with students, parents, teachers, community groups, and national organizations. From both local and national sources, feedback on the best course of action was submitted to committee members for review. The information below was used to draft this report.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL SYSTEMS

U.S. School Systems

As of May 2020, school closures were either ordered or recommended in 48 states, four U.S. territories, and DC.⁴¹ Among U.S. states, only Montana and Wyoming have not ordered or recommended closure through the end of this academic school year.⁴² These closures affect nearly 51 million students across 98,000 public schools.

Greater DMV Area

Given the interconnectedness of the populace and economies in the greater DMV area (to include DC, Maryland, and Virginia), great attention is paid to school reopening plans in our neighboring jurisdictions.

Maryland

⁴¹ Education Week. 2020. "Map: Coronavirus and School Closures (2020, May 6)." <https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/map-coronavirus-and-school-closures.html>.

⁴² Schools in Wyoming are closed through at least May 15, 2020.

On May 7, the Maryland State Department for Education released their Recovery Plan for Education.⁴³ While Maryland schools will remain closed through the end of this school year, the plan lays out **several reopening scenarios** for Maryland schools to consider. These options include one- or two-day rotations, an A/B- week alternating schedule, and a scenario where elementary school students would be prioritized while middle and high school students would continue with distance learning.

The Maryland Recovery Plan for Education describes supports and **specific considerations for special education students**. For students receiving special education services, the report discusses the importance of involving parents and families in the reopening and recovery planning process, including greater communications and decisionmaking power. Caring for the social-emotional well-being of this population of students is also critical to the recovery process.

Attention is also given to **Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs**, which may face unique obstacles as they reopen. Of note, many CTE programs donated their equipment, such as face masks, or lost supplies, such as food that may have spoiled. Some of this inventory will need to be replaced in order for CTE programs to resume. The inherent hands-on nature of CTE programs also poses a problem for any hybrid learning model where distance learning is utilized.

The plan also lays out in great detail **specific strategies for school personnel** to implement once they reopen, such as assessing mental health needs and displaying posters about proper hygiene techniques.

Virginia

Virginia was one of the first states in the U.S. to order closure of all schools for the remainder of the school year.⁴⁴ As of May 10, no reopening plan for the next academic year had been released, though state leaders have indicated that schools will reopen in some manner for in-person schooling this fall. DC will closely monitor any release of reopening guidelines and will continue to coordinate with nearby school districts on reopening plans.

Other States

As of May 7, schools in Montana were given the option to reopen for in-person instruction, though not all school districts have opted to do so. Of those that have reopened, some have given students the choice between in-person and distance learning, while others have decided

⁴³ Maryland State Department of Education. 2020. "Maryland's Recovery Plan for Education."
<http://marylandpublicschools.org/newsroom/Documents/MSDERecoveryPlan.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Education Week. 2020. "Coronavirus and Learning: What's Happening in Each State."
http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2020/04/coronavirus_and_schools_state_guide.html.

to focus on select populations of students in order to limit the number of individuals in the schools. The schools that have reopened have implemented procedures such as:

- Temperatures taken at the door;
- Staff members wear masks;
- Staggered arrival and dismissal times to limit student interaction, as well as staggered transitions between classes; and
- Frequent use of hand sanitizer and the disinfecting of commonly used spaces (such as school buses).

Schools in every other state remain closed for the remainder of the current academic year. A few states have begun to make plans for summer and fall, though only one state (Idaho) has released details around when and how. All other states have not released detailed plans.

Summer Offerings:

- Oregon anticipates that some childcare facilities, summer schools, and summer camps will reopen on May 15, 2020 with strict social distancing guidelines in place.
- California is exploring opening summer school for special-need students.
- Illinois indicated that summer programs may be able to open with safety measures in place.

Timeline for Reopening:

- California, Florida and Mississippi are considering an early start to their school year to make up for learning loss that occurred during distance learning.

Method of Instruction:

- California expects to offer a hybrid model of in-person and distance learning this fall.
- Colorado is exploring several options, including varying student schedules to allow for adequate social distancing as well as staggering daily start times.
- Idaho anticipates phasing in small groups of students for in-person learning.
- Illinois is preparing for both in-person and distance learning scenarios.
- New York and New Jersey are considering split or staggered in-person schedules.

Mitigation Guidelines:

- While details are sparse, other U.S. states are considering how to implement social distancing in classrooms, cafeterias and hallways (California, Colorado, Illinois, New York).
- Some states are examining enhanced cleanings and health protocols (California, New York).

International School Systems

International economies, including Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, Austria, Germany, France, Israel, South Korea, Japan, China, and Australia, are starting to reopen after massive disruption. Education and childcare dovetails with economic reopening, and adults who are returning to work need to feel confident that their children are safe and are learning.

Many geographies are choosing to **reopen schools in unique ways**, and for different populations. Reopening scenarios include

- **Select grades:** Many countries are reopening schools starting with students in specific grades, followed shortly after by students in the remaining grades
 - Countries starting with younger students: Austria, Denmark, France
 - Countries starting with older students in order to complete exams: Germany, South Korea⁴⁵
- **Select populations:** Select countries have prioritized providing limited space to populations that have a distinct need, including vulnerable populations, students with special needs, and/or children of essential workers
 - Countries: UK, and parts of Australia
- **Hybrid model:** Select countries have offered in-person learning to certain grades in addition to select priority populations (e.g., students with special needs)
 - Countries: Israel

Despite different reopening models, countries have adopted **rigorous social distancing standards**. Common practices include:

- Requiring 6+ feet of distance between students (Denmark)
- Promoting enhanced outdoor learning time (Norway)
- Limiting families from entering the school (China, Denmark, Norway)
- Staggering pick-up and drop-off schedules (Australia, Norway)
- Alternating schedules for students to limit number of students present at school (Australia, Austria, Germany)

For schools that have reopened, **participation by students and families has varied**. For example, Israel and parts of Australia have reported uptake between 60 and 70%, while the UK, which offers school space for children of essential workers and children with special needs, has reported a much lower uptake. Modest uptake may be due to many countries' decisions to make in-school attendance voluntary (e.g., Australia, Canada, Israel). However, it should also be noted that publicly available data on attendance is limited.

⁴⁵ South Korea initially opted for a completely virtual instructional environment in order to limit disease spread. After seeing several weeks of only a limited number of cases, South Korea announced plans to bring back select grades.

Countries have adopted many other common practices to ensure students and staff remain safe, such as:

- **Classroom and instructional design:** Prohibiting toys and materials from home, placing students in small groups to limit mixing (Norway, Denmark, Israel)
- **Emergency response:** Detailing plans for responding to a confirmed case, including quarantine and communication protocols (China, Japan, South Korea)
- **Health and hygiene:** Implementing strict hand-washing protocols, cleaning surfaces regularly, (in some cases) requiring use of masks and other PPE for students and staff, requiring routine ventilation of classrooms (Australia, China, Norway)
- **Student activity:** Limiting and restricting recess, sports, and musical activities, prohibiting access to libraries (Denmark, Germany)

FURTHER RESOURCES

Over the course of the last few weeks, committee members and leaders across agencies have convened focus groups, distributed and analyzed surveys, and gathered and reviewed hundreds of pages of material. A full compilation of conversations and resources is outlined below.

Focus Groups:

- PAVE Townhall with Deputy Mayor Kihn
- DME-facilitated Student Focus Groups
- Teaching for Change: Outreach Summary
- School-led Focus Groups with school-based staff and parents representing Cardozo Education Campus, Hendley Elementary School, Ron Brown College Preparatory High School, Anacostia High School, and Columbia Heights Education Campus
- DC Education Leaders of Color: Stakeholder Feedback
- DC Education Coalition for Change: Key Findings from DECC's April 2020 COVID-19 Listening Campaign
- OSSE & Thrive by Five Engagement with the Early Childhood Education Community
- Education Forward DC: LEA Focus Groups Feedback for ReOpen DC Education Childcare Subcommittee
- Washington Teachers' Union: Issues Raised by Educators participating in the WTU Equity Collaborative Session: Making Equity Work in Distance Teaching and Learning
- Quality Improvement Network (QIN) Policy Council
- The Early Childhood Education Reopening Working Group
- Special Education Advisory Group, Washington Lawyers Committee and parents

Surveys:

- Parents Amplifying Voices in Education: Parent Impact Survey Results

- Parents Amplifying Voices in Education: School Leader Impact Survey results
- Young Women's Project: Survey and Recommendations on Student Mental Health
- Education Forward DC: LEA Survey Feedback for ReOpen DC Education Childcare Subcommittee
- Mayor Bowser's ReOpen DC Advisory Committee: Survey
- Education Forward DC: LEA Feedback Survey Summary
- Under Three Coalition and DC Association for the Education of Young Children: Survey
- DCPS: Learning at Home Family Survey
- DC PCSB: Access and Connectivity Survey
- State Board of Education: Responses to the ReOpen DC Questions
- C4DC: Survey for ReOpen DC Committee on EEC

Washington, DC Resources:

- Parents Amplifying Voices in Education: Coronavirus Updates & Resources for Families
- EmpowerEd: An Education Recovery Plan for Washington, DC
- Health Equity Report: The Social & Structural Determinants of Health
- Health Equity Report: Equity Committee Background and Guidance
- Washington Teachers' Union: Reopen DC Task Force Recommendations, Overview of Phased Reopening Plan
- AFL-CIO: Working People's Plan for Reopening Washington, D.C.
- DC PCSB: Universal Broadband for Public and Private School Students
- DC Association for the Education of Young Children and Under 3 DC: DC Childcare Investments
- Ward 7 Education Council: Petition
- Digital Equity in DC Education: Recommendations for ReOpen DC Advisory Group
- Letter from parents and community leaders to ReOpen Ed Committee: "Parents Urge City to Address Critical Issues Re Learning in a Pandemic"
- Leaders of Color: Stakeholder Feedback from DC Education Leaders of Color
- Recommendations for Re-Opening of DCPS Opportunity Academies
- Letter based on a focus group from the Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principles and Educators (SHAPPE)

Resources from Other Jurisdictions:

- Johns Hopkins Bloomberg's School of Public Health: Public Health Principles for a Phased Reopening During COVID-19: Guidance for Governors

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Interim Guidance for Child Care Programs and Schools
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission
- American Federation of Teachers: A Plan to Reopen America's Schools and Communities
- National Council on School Facilities: Resources on Cleaning and Reopening
- National Council on School Facilities: Now What? Navigating K-12 Reopening
- American Enterprise Institute: A Blueprint for Back to School
- Opportunity Labs: Return to School Roadmap
- Washington Post: No touching, sharing or borrowing pencils: Israeli students go back to school
- McKinsey & Company: Coronavirus COVID-19: Considerations for Reopening Schools
- Minnesota Department of Health: MDH Guidance for Social Distancing in Schools
- National Summer School Initiative: Concept Paper
- UNICEF: Framework for Reopening Schools
- U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services: Supplemental Fact Sheet Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Schools While Serving Children with Disabilities