



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gov. Lee Unveils Safe Reopening Plan for Tennessee Schools

Nashville, Tenn. – Tennessee Governor Bill Lee announced today the State of Tennessee’s recommendations to reopen schools for the 2020-2021 school year.

“Providing parents a choice in their children’s education is incredibly important,” said Gov. Lee. “In-person learning is the medically sound, preferred option. Our state is doing everything we can to work with local school districts and ensure that in-person learning is made available in a way that protects the health and safety of our students and educators, and this plan helps us accomplish that goal.”

“Leading health organizations, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Academy of Pediatrics, and National Academies of Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering, have all stressed the importance of in-person learning for students,” said Tennessee Commissioner of Health Dr. Lisa Piercey. “The Department of Health has worked with Department of Education to establish a protocol to keep school buildings open safely and cause minimal disruption when positive cases occur.”

“Tennessee is prioritizing health and safety of our school communities,” said Tennessee Commissioner of Education Penny Schwinn. “Ensuring schools, teachers, families, and students have the critical resources and supports they need to start the new school year strong is paramount, and I am thankful to Governor Lee for continuing to support education in Tennessee as schools reopen across the state.”

The recommendations from the Department of Health and the Department of Education are below:

Health

When to Test & Quarantine

10-Day Sick Window

Anyone testing positive for COVID-19 must isolate themselves at home for 10 days from the onset of their symptoms or 10 days from the date their test was done if they never developed symptoms. Fever must be gone and they must be feeling better for at least 24 hours.

14-Day Quarantine

Anyone who has been within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for 10 minutes or more must quarantine themselves at home for 14 days from the last time they were with that person. These time periods do not change with a doctor's note or with a negative test.

Contact Tracing

Keeping schools open for in-person instruction depends upon our ability to quickly isolate people who are sick and quarantine their close contacts.

If a child is ill, parents should not send them to school where they could infect others. If a child is diagnosed with COVID-19, parents are asked to assist the Department of Health by contacting the child's close contacts so those individuals can quarantine at home.

If a parent is notified that their child has been in close contact of someone with COVID-19, please follow the guidelines and quarantine them at home for 14 days.

Texting Platform

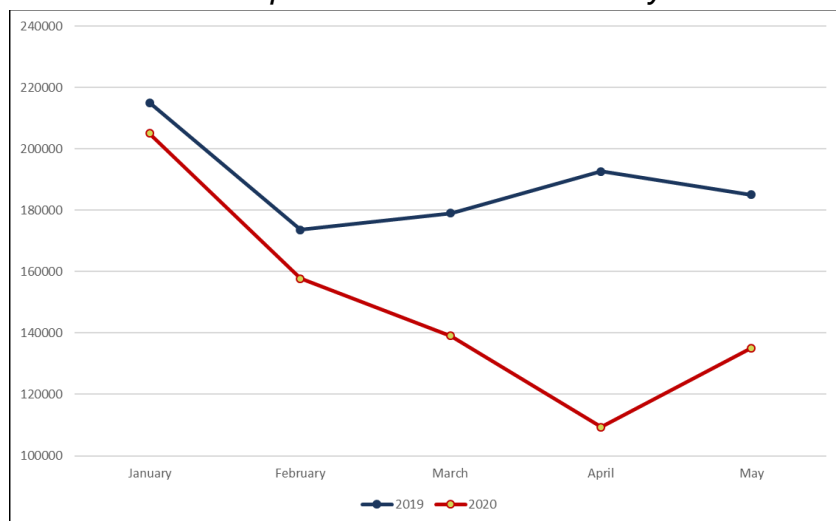
Schools may be able to assist with notifying families of the need to quarantine through text messaging services. If parents receive a message from their child's school informing you that your child needs to stay at home for 14 days, please follow those instructions.

Immunizations

School entry immunizations have not changed. Even if students are learning online, they still need the required immunizations to register for school. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on immunization rates: 43 percent fewer immunizations were reported during April 2020 compared to April 2019.

It is critical that children receive regular check-ups and have their immunizations up to date. Immunizations mitigate outbreaks of preventable diseases, such as the measles and whooping cough.

COVID-19 Impact on Vaccinations 0-19 years old



Supporting Child Wellbeing

In response to the pandemic's long-term effects on Tennessee's school districts and students, Gov. Lee charged Commissioner Schwinn with convening the 38-member COVID-19 Child Wellbeing Task Force. The findings of the taskforce's [Initial COVID-19 Impact Summary](#) include:

- Reports of suspected child abuse dropped by 27% during peak stay-at-home orders in Tennessee;
- 75 percent of students nationally receive mental health care in a school setting;
- In 2019, approx. 45,000 school-aged children were served for mental health through the community-based system;
- Approximately half of districts were able to address or check on wellness and safety of students during spring closures;
- Nearly 14 million students across the country go hungry when school is not in session, so resumption of in-person learning is critical to ensure access to nutrition.

Academics

Empowering Parents

Whether it be in-person or virtual, we want parents to have a choice in their child's education. For those who choose the virtual option, the State will provide free resources to supplement their district's school-based services. The resources include:

- **Early Literacy Resource:** A free resource for students pre-K through 2nd grade to build foundational skills and support early literacy;
- **PBS Learning Series:** Complete lessons for 1st- 9th grade students in both math and ELA taught by Tennessee teachers;
- **STE(A)M Resource Hub:** Three challenges per week to spark creative thinking, design, and career exploration from the home;
- **Start of the Year Checkpoint:** A free and optional assessment to measure student performance at the beginning of the year and help inform educators about student readiness for the year ahead;

Advocating for Students

Technology and Continuity of Operations

Devices and connectivity will be critical resources to ensure quality remote learning this school year. The [\\$50 million grant initiative](#) to support district technology purchases is now available and is intended to increase student access to one-to-one instructional devices such as laptops or tablets.

The Department of Education is supporting districts, schools and teachers through additional WiFi and technology supports, including 250,000 devices.

Meal Supports & Food Accessibility

The [school meal finder](#) will continue to be provided to ensure parents know where to go for school meal programs should a school building be closed.

Financial assistance is available for families who qualify for free or reduced school lunches, through the Department of Human Services' Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program.

Supporting Teachers

Safety Equipment for Teachers

The State is providing no-cost PPE, including face masks for any school stakeholder who wants or needs one, thermometers for every school, and face shields for every staff member. This includes 298,000 cloth reusable masks for teachers, and 27 million disposable masks for students distributed by the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency.

Every classroom teacher will have a full-year classroom disinfecting kit to use so no teacher pays for these materials out of their own pockets. The kits include hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, gloves and masks.

School nurses will be provided with surgical masks, gloves, protective gowns, and face shields.

Professional Development Resources

The Department of Education will offer free professional development classes on remote teaching that will cover relationship-building, using instructional materials, and system set-up. These resources have extended through August 31st.

Principals and assistant principals will have access to remote education professional development through UT-Knoxville, and teachers have access through Trevecca Nazarene University.

The Department also announced the [Special Education Additional Endorsement Grant](#), which will enable every public school district to provide at least one teacher with a special education endorsement (SPED) for free. Eight SPED Additional Endorsement Grants, totaling \$1 million, have been awarded to Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) to deliver courses in a virtual environment.

Assisting Districts

Decision-Making Protocol

The Department of Education will provide district leaders with a decision-tree that includes recommendations on how to keep school buildings open safely when a case or cases are confirmed among students or staff, developed in collaboration with the Department of Health and School & District Action Teams.

Recruiting Additional Personnel

A [job board](#) for educators and substitute teachers has been created so districts can use remote resources to ensure they are staffed for the start of the year and can fill vacancies more quickly. More than 1,000 educators have already utilized the job board, showing the strong teaching workforce present in Tennessee.

Funding

Ensuring districts have the resources they need to implement remote learning with fidelity is paramount. The [\\$11 million grant program](#) to bolster programmatic supports and implementation will be released to districts soon.

The Department of Education is establishing a criteria list for potential district partners to ensure supports are well-versed in the academic programming needs to successfully implement district Continuous Learning Plans (CLPs).

As districts finalize their CLPs and build team capacity to effectively implement them, this grant program will provide funding for supports such as:

- Training educators on effective instructional practices in virtual classroom environments;
- Integrating the use of high-quality instructional materials in virtual instruction;
- Supporting operational aspects of virtual instruction, including IT support for students, families, and staff.

Tennessee will continue to ensure parents, teachers, and school leaders are equipped with the appropriate information to provide a high-quality education for all students.

Contact Sports

Gov. Lee will issue Executive Order No. 55 to allow for contact sports to resume, provided they follow the requirements of TSSAA. Non-TSSAA schools must follow equivalent guidelines, and non-school-sponsored athletics should follow the [Tennessee Pledge](#) guidelines. An update to the Pledge guidelines will be forthcoming.