

CDC's Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Mitigation

K-12 schools should be the last settings to close after all other mitigation measures in the community have been employed, and the first to reopen when they can do so safely. Many K-12 schools that have implemented mitigation strategies have been able to safely open for in-person instruction and remain open. This operational strategy presents a pathway to reopen schools and help them remain open through consistent use of mitigation strategies, especially universal and correct use of masks and physical distancing.



Mitigation strategies to reduce transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in schools

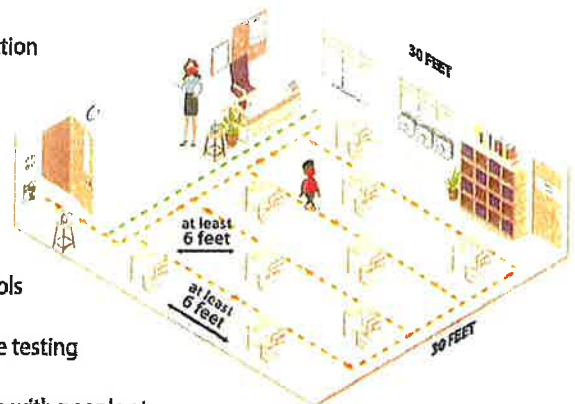
Regardless of the level of community transmission, all schools should use and layer [mitigation strategies](#). Schools providing in-person instruction should prioritize two mitigation strategies:

- Universal and correct use of [masks](#) should be required.
- Physical distancing (at least 6 feet) should be maximized to the greatest extent possible.

Phased mitigation and learning modes

At any level of community transmission, there are options for in-person instruction (either full or hybrid) for all schools by strictly using mitigation strategies.

- In-person learning for elementary schools is likely to have less risk of in-school transmission than for middle schools and high schools.
- Families of students who are at increased risk of severe illness or who live with people at high risk should be given the option of virtual instruction regardless of the mode of learning offered.
- In-person instruction should be prioritized over extracurricular activities including sports and school events, to minimize risk of transmission in schools and protect in-person learning.
- Schools are encouraged to use cohorting or podding of students to facilitate testing and contact tracing, and to minimize transmission across cohorts.
- Students, teachers, and staff who are at high risk of severe illness or who live with people at high risk should be provided virtual options.



cdc.gov/coronavirus

Recommended Implementation of Mitigation Strategies and K-12 School Learning Modes by Level of Community Transmission

Low Transmission ¹ Blue	Moderate Transmission Yellow	Substantial Transmission Orange	High Transmission Red
All schools: Universal and correct use of masks is required; implementing other key mitigation strategies: handwashing and respiratory etiquette; cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities; contact tracing and diagnostic testing ² in combination with quarantine and isolation.			
K-12 schools open for full in-person instruction Physical distancing of 6 feet or more to the greatest extent possible ³		Elementary schools in hybrid mode ⁴ ; physical distancing of 6 feet or more required	
		Middle and high schools in hybrid learning mode or reduced attendance Physical distancing of 6 feet or more is required	Middle and high schools in virtual only instruction unless they can strictly implement all mitigation strategies, and have few cases; schools that are already open for in-person instruction can remain open, but only if they strictly implement mitigation strategies and have few cases ⁵
Sports and extracurricular activities with masks required; physical distancing of 6 feet or more to the greatest extent possible ⁶	Sports and extracurricular activities with masks and physical distancing of 6 feet or more required	Sports and extracurricular activities occur only if they can be held outdoors, with masks and physical distancing of 6 feet or more required	Sports and extracurricular activities virtual only

¹Levels of community transmission defined as total new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days (low, 0-9; moderate, 10-49; substantial, 50-99; high, ≥100) and percentage of positive tests in the past 7 days (low, <5%; moderate, 5-7.9%; substantial, 8-9.9%; high, ≥10%).²Levels of community transmission defined as total new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days (low, 0-9; moderate, 10-49; substantial, 50-99; high, ≥100) and percentage of positive tests in the past 7 days (low, <5%; moderate, 5-7.9%; substantial, 8-9.9%; high, ≥10%).

³Diagnostic testing for SARS-CoV-2 is intended to identify occurrence of SARS-CoV-2 infection at the individual level and is performed when there is a reason to suspect that an individual may be infected, such as having symptoms or suspected recent exposure.

⁴If physical distancing of at least 6 feet among all students, teachers, and staff within a class, cohort, or pod is not possible at all times, schools should ensure physical distancing between classes, cohorts, and pods.

⁵Hybrid learning or reduced attendance is intended to maximize physical distance between students. Schools may consider hybrid learning models or instructional modes where substantial percentages of students are in virtual only instruction. At all levels of community transmission, schools should provide families the option to participate in virtual learning if a student or family member is at risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

⁶Strict implementation of mitigation strategies includes policies that require consistent and correct use of masks, physical distancing of at least 6 feet, all other key mitigation strategies.

⁷School officials should implement limits on spectators and attendees for sports, extracurricular activities, and school events as consistent with recommendations for masking and physical distancing for each phase.

Additional COVID-19 Prevention in Schools

Testing

When schools implement testing combined with mitigation, they can detect new cases to prevent outbreaks, reduce the risk of further transmission, and protect students, teachers, and staff from COVID-19.

- **Diagnostic Testing:** At all levels of community transmission, schools should offer referrals to [diagnostic testing](#) to any student, teacher, or staff member who is exhibiting [symptoms of COVID-19](#) at school or who is a close contact of a person who tested positive.
- **Screening Testing:** Some schools may also elect to use screening testing as a strategy to identify cases and prevent secondary transmission. Weekly screening testing can be used as an additional layer of mitigation to complement mitigation strategies in schools.

Vaccination for teachers and staff, and in communities as soon as supply allows

Teachers and school staff hold jobs critical to the continued functioning of society and are at potential occupational risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2. In order to support safe school reopening, state, territorial, local, and tribal (STLT) officials should consider giving high priority to teachers in early phases of vaccine distribution.

Access to vaccination should nevertheless not be considered a condition for reopening schools for in-person instruction. Even after teachers and staff are vaccinated, schools need to continue mitigation measures for the foreseeable future, including requiring masks in schools and physical distancing.

KEEP SPACE BETWEEN YOU AND OTHERS





MOUNTAIN HOME SCHOOL DISTRICT 193
470 North 3rd East P.O. Box 1390 Mountain Home, Idaho 83647-1390

James G. Gilbert, Superintendent
(208) 587-2580
FAX (208) 587-9896
www.mtnhomesd.org

Date: 2/18/2021
To: Idaho House Education Committee
RE: In Person Learning Bill

Dear Honorable Committee Member's:

I am writing in support of Superintendent Ybarra's in-person learning bill. The bill emphasizes the importance of in-person learning for students in our state. The bill allows for local school boards to make the critical decisions on how best to operate in emergency situations. In an emergency this bill will continue to give districts the ability to offer in-person learning if it is safe to do so. It will also allow districts to offer hybrid or remote learning if that is the best scenario for operations during the emergency. I think it is critical to keep that flexibility in the hands of the local school board. Every Idaho school district has different resources available to deal with these situations. Letting elected school boards maintain local control will allow them to best meet the needs of the students in those communities.

Sincerely,

James Gilbert
Superintendent
Mountain Home School District #193

"Committed to Learning Today for Tomorrow's World"



LAPWAI SCHOOL DISTRICT #341

404 S. Main
Lapwai, Idaho 83540
(208) 843-2622

Thursday, February 18, 2021

Idaho House Education Committee:

Please accept my full support of Superintendent Ybarra's pursuit to ensure thorough education is met by providing students with access to in-person instruction where safety requirements can be developed at the local level. This approach does not impinge upon the authority of the local board of trustees. Local control would still allow for consultation with health officials to determine the safest approach to learning possible.

Our district has experienced some success with blended and remote learning options this year, yet nothing can replace the impact of in-person learning. This bill may emphasize the importance of in-person instruction, yet authority will remain in the hands of local boards to make operating decisions in emergency situations.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me for additional information.

Wic' éey wáaq'is - Stay Well

Qe'ciyew'yew' - Thank You

Dr. David M. Aiken
Superintendent, Lapwai School District # 341
Federal Programs Director
Homeless Education Liaison
Idaho State Chair, National Association of Federally Impacted Schools
(208) 843-2622
daiken@lapwai.org

Together, we ensure all students will reach their full potential.



MADISON
School District 321
Caring Community Schools

60 West Main, Rexburg, ID 83440 • Phone: (208) 359-3300 • Fax: (208) 359-3345

Dr. Geoffrey M. Thomas Ed.D., Superintendent

Randy B. Lords, Jr., Ed.S. Asst. Superintendent
Travis Schwab, Director of Special Services

Varr Snedaker, CPA, Business Manager

2/16/2021

To whom it may concern,

This letter is in support of Idaho Superintendent Sherri Ybarra and her effort to codify and strengthen Idaho's commitment to local educational control, and her passionate advocacy and commitment to the in-classroom experience.

If the COVID-19 experience has taught us anything, it is that keeping our schools open is absolutely essential. The forced shut down last spring was ruinous and had severe negative effects on students, parents, staff and communities.

In Madison 321, the Board of Trustees and myself felt that while providing alternative methods of instruction was important, we were adamant that our schools remain open five days a week, and that children had an opportunity for the in-classroom experience.

There is no question that the best learning model is in a classroom setting, with children being taught by a caring, certificated teacher.


The Board of Trustees and I have been inundated with comments from the Rexburg community thanking the district for keeping our schools open. Please find below attached an excerpt from an email I recently received from a Madison parent. (This letter is indicative of the compliments we have been receiving and could have attached a dozen more)

"I'm so very thankful for what Madison School District has done with our children's schooling arrangements. That they have been in in-person classes since August is such an immense blessing for them and for the community at large. And options for those students who cannot or chose to not go in person make it a win-win for all involved.

I was already very happy with the schooling here in Rexburg—the teachers my sons have had have been more than outstanding—but that you have chosen this path has given me an increase in pride at what the district is all about!"

Please give every consideration to Superintendent Ybarra's bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Geoff Thomas". The signature is stylized with a large initial "G" and a long horizontal stroke.

Dr. Geoff Thomas
Superintendent
Madison 321

SHOSHONE JOINT SCHOOL DISTRICT 312
61 EAST HIGHWAY 24
SHOSHONE, IDAHO 83352
(208) 886-2381

Dr. Rob Waite
Superintendent ext 312

Shannon Harris
Business Manager ext 311

Heather Wallace
District Clerk ext 310

February 16, 2021

Sherri Ybarra
650 West State Street, 3rd Floor
Boise, ID 83702

RE: Proposed House Bill 175

Superintendent Ybarra:

I have read with interest your introduction of legislation that recognizes that in person learning is the preferred method of educating students. I don't know whether legislation is the proper way to promote this clearly true ideal, I will leave that to the politicians. As a district leader, it is my job to analyze the data, trends and local conditions each day to make good decisions regarding the school age children in our care. I have taken this job very seriously and each day have studied, read and analyzed all the information I can find. It is crystal clear that the spirit of your proposal is correct and here is why.

A quick online search will document that COVID is of little to no danger to school age children, so I will focus my thoughts on the damage to children from not having in person school.

I can tell you from reviewing the data, that not only is it more dangerous for kids to not be in school than potential danger from COVID, but it isn't even close. Several points have become clear from the data: Online learning does not work for the majority of children, but especially the demographics that make up most school districts in Idaho. The Economist, put it best, "staggering inequalities in online learning. Hispanic students lose 3 times as much learning compared to white students, poor students lose 5 times as much learning compared to affluent students" with online learning.

Hybrids don't work. "Surveying the body of evidence from studies in Colorado, Maryland, Minnesota and Virginia, Dave Marcotte and Benjamin Hansen concluded, "the percentage of students passing math assessments falls by about one-third to one-half a percentage point for each day school is closed." (T74) One California district reported that 40% of elementary students have not logged on once to the online portal. The San Jose Mercury news reported that failure rates have "doubled" in California districts so far in 2020-2021. Anecdotally, I can tell you that local districts have had similar results with online learning in Idaho. The local stories back up the national data.

We educate students to be lifelong learners and contributing citizens

Not having school is clearly detrimental to student learning, socialization, and even future earning power. An article in US News noted that mental health emergencies increased 47% during the first round of school closures. An NEJM subgroup on addiction estimated a 25% increase in drug use amongst school aged children, 39% of school aged children already enrolled in rehab had NO access to treatment programs during closures and 7 million school age children currently under mental health treatment ONLY receive such treatment from school. This is called unintended consequences. Accidents, suicide, murder, and deaths associated with substance abuse will exponentially dwarf the deaths from COVID in school age children and shutting schools only exasperates the already monumental problem children face in dealing with these issues.

Not only is hybrid or online learning detrimental, the idea that you can “catch up” in the future by simply returning to in person instruction isn’t based in fact. NWEA reported using research based on lost learning during summer, when schools return to in person learning they can expect gains to be “reduced by 30%.” You can’t catch up easily, if at all.

In summary, it is clearly dangerous for children to be out of school and the aftershocks of these decisions will reverberate in our society for generations. Public health should look at all the consequences of all actions. Kids need to be in school with face to face instruction. I would submit based on the facts, data and science it is child abuse for schools not to be open. Therefore, I support your efforts to recognize this reality and encourage you to continue to bring this issue to the forefront of education discussions.

Thank you,

Rob Waite

Dr. Rob Waite
Superintendent
Shoshone School District

CHAIRMAN

Doug McMillon
Walmart

PRESIDENT & CEO

Joshua Bolten
Business Roundtable

February 25, 2021

The Honorable Brad Little
Governor of Idaho
Idaho State Capitol
700 West Jefferson Street
Boise, Idaho 83702

Dear Governor Little,

On behalf of the CEO members of Business Roundtable, thank you for your leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. We applaud your actions to help curb the spread of the virus, including recent efforts to vaccinate individuals across your state.

We appreciate the difficult choices Governors have faced as they work to keep citizens protected from the virus. In light of the growing body of evidence that schools can be open with appropriate mitigation measures, I write to urge you to ensure the safe reopening of your state's schools and childcare centers for in-person instruction as quickly as possible.

Business Roundtable companies collectively employ nearly 20 million workers, many of whom have school-aged children. School closures are creating enormous challenges for working parents, and — even more troubling — are inflicting damage on our nation's students. Business Roundtable CEOs are deeply concerned about the enormous toll that virtual learning has taken on America's students over the past year. Despite heroic efforts by many educators and families to deliver effective online instruction, students nationwide are trailing and failing at significantly higher rates compared to pre-pandemic student outcomes.

For students from disadvantaged backgrounds — who often lack digital resources, broadband access, and other at-home supports — the achievement gap has continued to widen during the pandemic relative to their more affluent peers. Recent [McKinsey & Company](#) analysis points to significant learning loss among students of color, who are approximately twenty percent more likely to be exclusively remote than their white peers and twice as likely to have no live interaction with teachers. McKinsey & Company projects a backward slide among minority students of up to 12

months in math by the end of the current school year, compared with up to nine months for their white peers. Students who are not in school settings also suffer from profound mental health challenges, food insecurity, and other serious adverse impacts when they cannot access school-based services.

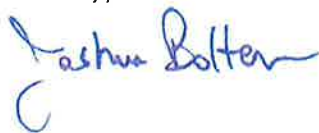
Experience across the United States and in other countries has demonstrated that with proper protocols in place, schools can safely reopen to in-person instruction. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that schools "should be the last settings to close after all other mitigation measures have been employed and the first to reopen when they can do so safely." New CDC [guidance](#) further indicates that even areas with the highest community spread can return to in-person elementary school instruction with appropriate mitigation measures in place, such as spacing, masks and frequent cleaning. Also, screening students and teachers can play an important role in risk mitigation.

Keeping students and school personnel safe necessitates community-wide vigilance to protect against viral outbreaks. We urge all state and community leaders to take actions that reinforce risk mitigations and curb high-risk behaviors.

As business leaders who value our employees and customers throughout your state, Business Roundtable has advocated for federal resources to support states and school districts to safely return to high-quality, in-person classroom instruction for all students, as well as resources to support the families hardest hit by the pandemic. We will continue to push for lawmakers to make these vital investments. We urge you to use these additional resources to ensure that schools safely reopen.

We stand ready to support your efforts on behalf of our nation's students and will do everything we can to ensure that you receive the resources you need to keep schools safe and open.

Sincerely,



Joshua Bolten
President & CEO
Business Roundtable

KAHLE BECKER, ATTORNEY AT LAW
223 N. 6th St., Ste 325
Boise, ID 83702
Office: 208-345-8466
Fax: 208-906-8663
kahle@kahlebeckerlaw.com

February 11, 2021

Governor Brad Little
governor@gov.idaho.gov

Senator Chuck Winder
CWinder@senate.idaho.gov

Scott Bedke
SBedke@house.idaho.gov

Re: Open Boise Schools

Dear Governor Little, Senator Winder, and Speaker Bedke,

I am an attorney working with a recently formed grassroots organization of parents of students in the Boise School District called "Open Boise Schools." I am also a parent of a student enrolled in Boise School District. I am writing to ask your assistance in getting our children back into the classroom for 5 days a week in person learning.

We are now approaching the one-year anniversary when Boise School District elected to send our kids home to fend for themselves in their education. Boise School District delayed opening this fall, briefly went to a hybrid model, shut down in early November for several months, and only recently returned to a hybrid 2 day a week learning model. All the while, nearly every other school district throughout Idaho has been able to maintain a more consistent 5 day a week in person learning environment. We do not believe this conduct meets the standard required by Article IX Section 1 of Idaho's Constitution which provides:

CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE OF IDAHO
ARTICLE IX EDUCATION AND SCHOOL LANDS

Section 1. LEGISLATURE TO ESTABLISH SYSTEM OF FREE SCHOOLS. The stability of a republican form of government depending mainly upon the intelligence of the people, it shall be the duty of the legislature of Idaho, to establish and maintain a general, uniform and thorough system of public, free common schools.

There are no orders from Central District Health or Governor Little prohibiting in person learning. Only a few miles away, West Ada School district, the largest in Idaho, has allowed younger children to remain in the classroom 5 days a week, and recently announced its plans for returning to

5 day a week full time instruction. Yet at their February 8, 2021 meeting, Boise's School Board couldn't even muster the votes to return K-2nd kids back to school by February 18, 2021.

You all, the American Academy of Pediatrics, Dr. Fauci, President Trump and now President Biden all have advocated for a return to in person instruction. Teachers were rightfully sent to the front of the line to be vaccinated. It is now time for them to return to the classroom with reasonable accommodations like mask wearing and hand washing in place.

We have pleaded our case to the Boise School District and yet they continue to come up with excuse after excuse as to why they are unable to get our kids back in the classroom. While we agree that those students who have elected to receive a virtual education should be entitled to continue to do so, the rest of us who have elected to keep our kids enrolled in the traditional in person setting should now get back in the classroom. Unfortunately, it is clear no amount of studying the situation by the current board or administration will result in the required action that should be apparent to any reasonable person. The Board appears to be content to glide through the rest of the school year in a 2 day a week hybrid model, while our children and parents struggle.

Our hope is to avoid filing litigation to right this injustice. We therefore ask that you provide whatever assistance you are able to provide to direct Boise School District to take whatever action is necessary to get our kids back in school as expeditiously as possible. Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

/s/ J. Kahle Becker
Attorney at Law

Cc Open Boise Schools
Boise School District Board and Administration
Idaho Statesman