

Archdiocese of Baltimore
Catholic Schools



**Reopening Guidance
for the 2020-2021
School Year**



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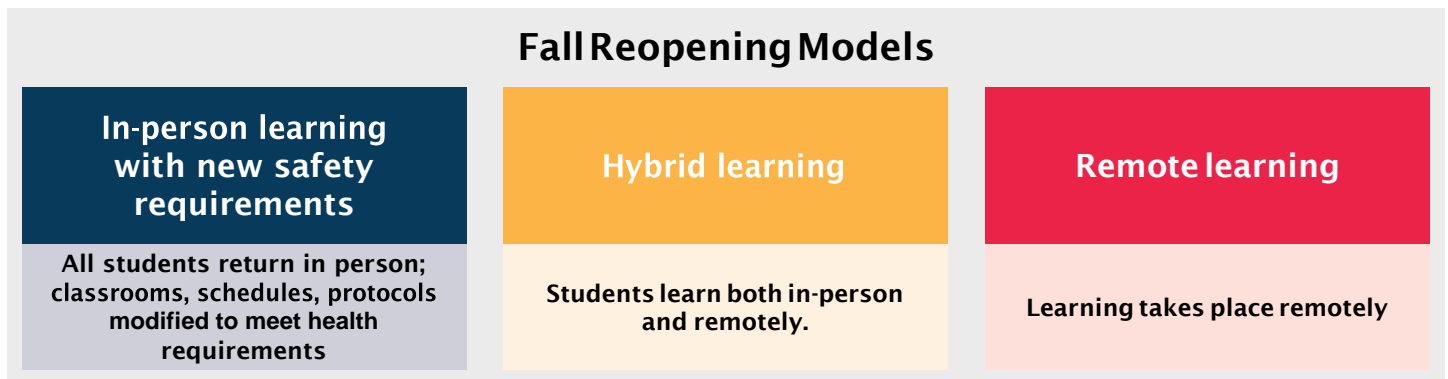
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Dear Catholic School Families,

The Archdiocese of Baltimore Department of Catholic Schools has developed a comprehensive plan for the safe return of faculty and staff on August 24, 2020 and students on August 31 for instruction five days per week.

The plan is designed to maximize both safety and in-person instruction and requires strict adherence to all recommended safety practices, including social distancing and the wearing of facial coverings. Under the plan, most Catholic schools will be able to safely accommodate all students for five-day, in-person instruction; however, due to the size and staffing of some school facilities, some schools will begin the school year under a blended or hybrid model incorporating both in-person and remote learning.



Families who do not feel comfortable returning their child(ren) to in-person instruction will be able to have their child(ren) participate in remote learning, which includes synchronous instruction.

The Archdiocese’s reopening plan was developed with guidance and resources from state and local officials, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). It was developed by the Planning Ahead Task Force for Catholic Schools, which included healthcare professionals, counselors, educators, school leaders, parents, and experts in various applicable fields. Feedback from parents/guardians, faculty/staff, and students informed the final version of the plan.

Catholic schools have the ability to safely return to in-person instruction due to their facility and enrollment size. A significant investment in technology, infrastructure, and professional development, as well as the adoption of a variety of risk mitigation methods, are key factors in our school system’s ability to offer all three modes of operation (in-person, hybrid, and remote).

The recommendations outlined in the plan will provide guidance and support to all Archdiocesan Catholic schools to aid in the development of their individual plans for reopening. Families will receive communication from their school’s administration in the coming weeks regarding the specifics on how this plan will be implemented at their location.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to a Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. We are grateful for your partnership and look forward to welcoming our students back to the classroom, whether they be in person or participating virtually.

Yours in Christ,

*Dr. Donna Hargens
Superintendent of Catholic Schools*

*James Sellinger
Chancellor of Education*

***This document will be updated accordingly as guidelines, directives, and procedures evolve.*

HEALTH & SAFETY

HEALTH SCREENING PROTOCOLS FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF:

Schools will establish a daily health screening protocol for students and staff entering the building. The objective is to verify the absence of symptoms and known exposures. Those who lack a completed screening upon arrival at school, will have their temperature taken before they may enter the school building.

TEMPERATURE CHECKS

Faculty and staff will be required to take their temperature prior to entering school facilities.

Preschool and kindergarten students will have their temperatures taken and recorded upon arrival at school.

Students in grades one through 12 will be required to have their temperature taken by a parent or guardian prior to arrival at school.

Anyone registering a temperature greater than 100.0° F will be required to stay home.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (Face Masks)

All faculty, staff, and students (age 3+) are required to wear a cloth face mask when indoors and whenever social distancing is not possible outdoors.

Specific guidelines will be in place for when students and staff are permitted to be without a cloth face mask while on the school campus, such as during meals. Details will be provided in each school's reopening communication.

Schools have amended the uniform policy to include guidance relative to the color, design, and style of the cloth face masks that are permitted to be worn by students. Individual schools will provide details of the adaptations of the uniform policy.

Disposable masks will be provided in the event a student or staff member forgets to bring their cloth mask to campus.

Schools will provide appropriate alternatives, such as a face shield, for students and staff who have a verifiable medical basis for being unable to wear a cloth face covering.

HAND SANITIZER

Hand sanitizer stations will be placed throughout all school facilities, in classrooms and at entrance/exits for use prior to entering the building.



HAND WASHING

Hand washing will be required before and after meals, as well as encouraged throughout the day. Signs will be placed in all restrooms with proper hand washing procedures.

HEALTH ROOM

All schools will establish an isolation area where students and staff who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 can be separated from the rest of the school population. All Catholic schools will use this guidance to establish an isolation area for the start of the new school year.

School health suites have been evaluated and will be modified to ensure healthy students who need medication to be dispensed or who need other non-illness related treatment, will be cared for without exposure to potential infection.

Schools will have a supply of additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (gloves, goggles, gowns and N-95 rated face masks) for staff who are caring for a student or staff member who is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19



COVID-19 TESTING

Students and staff whose possible exposure to COVID-19 is being investigated, and those who are exhibiting symptoms, will be required to be tested in accordance with recommendations of state and local health authorities.

FACILITY MANAGEMENT

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

To mitigate the transmission of the COVID-19 virus in schools, cleaning and disinfection protocols have been established and will be implemented by each school. As part of this process, many Archdiocesan schools are utilizing a two-step disinfecting and protecting process to disinfect and protect all surfaces. The surface protectant that is being chosen by many schools comes with a guarantee of its bacteriostatic product, that it mechanically kills both viruses and bacteria on contact, allowing for 90 days of persistent protection against viruses and bacteria.

Schools will develop a schedule for cleaning and disinfecting daily, with increased attention to frequently touched surfaces (e.g. door handles, sink handles, desks, chairs, stair railings).

Teachers and Staff will clean frequently touched surfaces periodically throughout the day.

Staff who use cleaning and disinfectant products must ensure they are used and stored correctly and safely, with adequate ventilation. This includes using disinfecting products that meet criteria of the Environmental Protection Agency.



SIGNAGE

Signs will be placed at all entrance/exit doors stating the mask policy.

Posters on proper hand washing will be displayed in every bathroom, along with signs citing the permitted number of occupants per bathroom.

Directional signs will be placed on floors, guiding the flow of traffic in the hallways to mitigate risk and to promote social distancing.

There will be designated entry and exit paths.

Markers on floors will indicate proper social distancing intervals for waiting areas and lines.

Signs will be placed throughout buildings noting the number of occupants allowed at one time in the room to maintain recommended social distancing.

MODIFIED LAYOUT FOR CLASSROOMS AND COMMUNAL SPACES

Students will be spaced apart in each classroom, following the spacing recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control.



Desks should face in one direction. In order to maximize space to allow for proper social distancing, bookcases, filing cabinets, flexible seating options, and other non-essential classroom items have been removed.

Communal gathering spaces such as dining halls or student lounges will be closed. These spaces may be reconfigured into additional classroom space if needed.

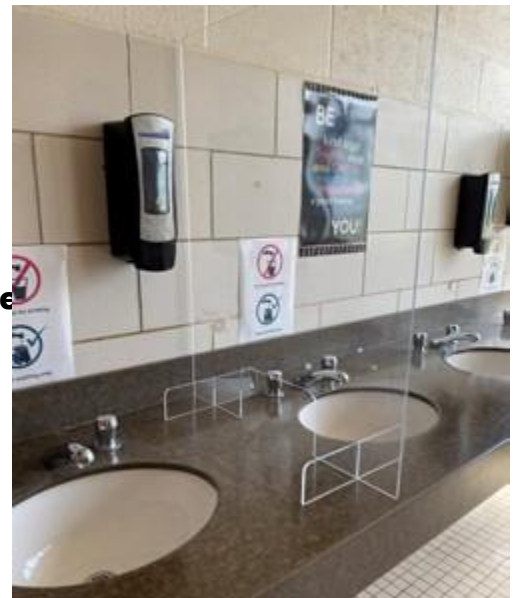
Physical barriers, such as plastic flexible screens, will be used when students cannot be at least 3-6 feet apart.

NOTE: Even with such barriers, masks will still be required.

VENTILATION

Ventilation and HVAC systems will have filter enhancements (where applicable) to maximize air flow and quality.

When weather permits, windows should be opened to increase circulation of outdoor air.



MATERIALS AND STUDENT SUPPLIES

Supplies, equipment, and devices should not be shared.

Each child's belongings will be separated and stored in individually labeled storage containers, cubbies, or taken home each day and cleaned.

Avoid use of lockers and coat rooms, if possible.

RECESS

Recess is an important part of the school day for students and will continue to be incorporated into the schedule.

To mitigate the transmission of the COVID-19 virus, protocols for recess and using playground equipment will be established and implemented at each school.

Recommendations include:

- **Providing enough space to accommodate proper social distancing.**
- **Cleaning and disinfecting playground equipment between class cohort uses.**
- **If the playground's material or configuration makes it difficult to clean and sanitize, or if social distancing cannot be maintained, the playground will not be used and other safe alternatives will be put in place.**



FOOD SERVICE GUIDELINES

- **Students must wash their hands with soap and water before and after eating.**
- **If working with a third-party vendor lunch program, lunches should be served individually. An online ordering system should be implemented to limit the in-person sale process for students to mitigate risk.**
- **Students should bring their own lunch or be served in individual disposable containers.**
- **No microwavable foods.**
- **No peanut allergy foods.**
- **Students should keep their lunch bags in their book bags or in their desk until lunch, so there is less handling.**
- **No refrigeration of lunch bags.**
- **Students should eat at desks in their classrooms. If students eat lunch in a cafeteria, social distancing guidelines should be followed, with a limited number of students at each table, restricted to students in the same class or assigned student group.**
- **No sharing of food/drink.**
- **Disinfect surfaces such as student desks and lunch tables before and after food contact is made.**

NOTE: Schools that participate in the Child Nutrition Program will follow the requirements/guidelines from USDA/MSDE (July 2020).

EXTENDED DAY

Catholic schools will continue to offer the Extended Day program to school families (where possible) with the appropriate social distancing, sanitizing and hygiene practices in place. The Extended Day program operations may vary from school-to-school, or be modified throughout the year. School-specific information will be shared in each school's reopening communications.

Schools are encouraged to develop a plan specific to each program to accommodate the variance in day-to-day pick-up times and designate and assign a set time for pick up based on parent schedules.

VISITORS

Schools will revise existing visitor policies and procedures to strictly limit who is permitted to visit during the school day. This will include restrictions on visits by parents and other family members.

The policy shall provide exceptions to include permitting visits by the following: emergency personnel responding to a call for assistance, vendors and contractors to address emergency situations, substitute teachers, members of the parish staff who support the school operations, and other individuals as approved by the principal or their designee.

Deliveries during the school day must be directed to a receiving area away from and isolated from student and staff, except for the employee who handles the delivery.

Authorized visitors to the school, must comply with all requirements related to social distancing, wearing PPE and hand sanitizing.

Tutors, therapists, or other individuals who previously were granted access to the school to work with a child, must now arrange to provide those services remotely (as applicable) and work with school principals to develop schedules to meet student needs.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Three modes of learning (in-person, hybrid, and remote) have been established, along with guidance and recommended instructional minutes associated with each mode. All schools will receive an instructional minute outline for each grade and subject for each learning mode, which will be used to develop instructional schedules to meet the needs of all students. Each school will develop schedules that fit the needs of their school community while using a few guiding principles; (1) maximize in-person learning in a physically safe environment, (2) prioritize in-person learning for lower grades, and (3) provide a synchronous remote learning option for all families.



In addition, all families will be provided with the option for their child(ren) to learn 100% in-person or 100% remotely. Requests from families to create their own hybrid schedule (e.g., mornings in-person and afternoons at home or in school some days and remote other days) will not be accommodated.

Under this plan, the majority of students will learn at school. When enrollment is greater than

the number of students that a classroom can safely accommodate, schools will adopt hybrid schedules where students alternate the days that they are in-school, with days they are learning remotely. Cohorts will be created for hybrid learning where students will attend school 2-4 days a week while learning at-home 1-3 days. Principals will be given the autonomy and guidance to create schedules best for their school community.



All archdiocesan schools added the equivalent of five instructional days to their 2020-21 academic calendar. The added time came from eliminating days off of school and the change of half days to full days. These days were added to provide teachers and students extra time for review, remediation, and enrichment.

PEDAGOGY (Method and Practice of Teaching)

Given the changing educational landscape, (e.g., social distancing in classrooms, remote learning for three months in Spring 2020, some students accessing content remotely while most are in the classroom, etc.), all archdiocesan educators will be provided with targeted professional development, additional resources (e.g., technology), and guidance on promising instructional practices for all three modes of learning.

All teachers will receive a comprehensive document containing instructional strategies for hybrid and remote learning. These pedagogical practices are grade and content-specific. Strategies include:



- **Guidance to safely set up classrooms and clean materials used in class.**
- **Guidance for engaging all students while some are in the classroom and others are at home.**
- **Ways to effectively assess student learning in order to provide high-quality instruction based on student knowledge and skill acquisition.**

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Increased professional development will be provided for all educators across the archdiocese, focusing on learning modules related to technology use, planning for the 2020-21 academic year, and implementing a new assessment platform.

Technology modules have been developed to provide a menu of options for professional learning based on teacher needs and comfort levels. Modules include:

- **Video conferencing resources (ZOOM and Google Meet).**
- **Tutorials, applications, tips, and examples to integrate G-Suite into teaching.**
- **Digital tools by subject areas to support technology integration.**
- **Set-up and deployment of the camera/sound bar unit for a variety of classroom settings.**

CATHOLIC IDENTITY

All schools will be provided support in implementing promising strategies that integrate Catholic identity across the school while navigating space restrictions in churches, limits on large gatherings, and a significant number of students learning at home.



Strategies to promote Catholic identity include, but are not limited to:

- **School-wide prayer services streamed online**
- **Daily prayer for all students, whether they are learning in-person or at home**
- **Increasing the amount of Catholic identity integration into other content areas**

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICE

Structures to support the social, emotional, and mental well-being of students, faculty, staff, and families have also been established.

All students with diagnosed learning differences will receive a student accommodation plan. Each school's Student Advocacy Team will assign a point person for each student and revise the student's accommodation plan based on whether or not they are learning in person and/or at home.

For the 2020-21 academic year, schools will implement strategies, resources and activities to address relationships, transitions and family engagement to provide feelings of connectedness and safety. Some strategies include, but are not limited to:

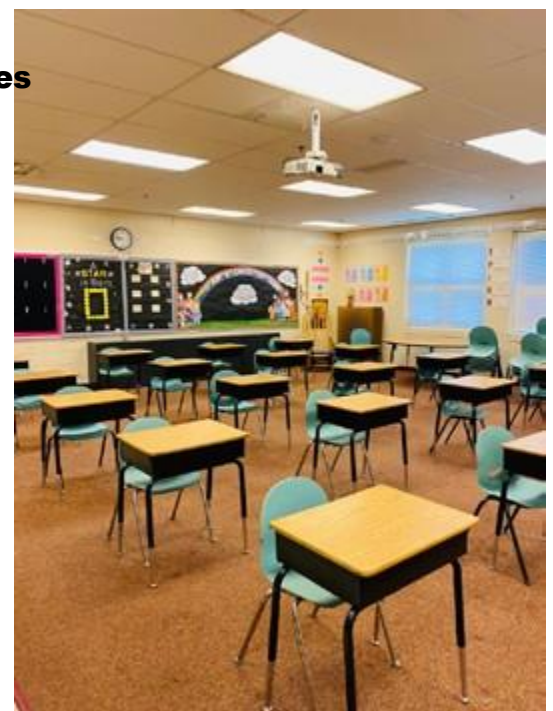
- **Hosting virtual school gatherings**
- **Establishing school-wide Emotional Wellness Committees**
- **Spaces dedicated for faculty, staff, and students to safely relax and pray**

In partnership with the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Kennedy Krieger Institute, and the Chesapeake Mental Health Collaborative, schools will offer workshops for teachers and families that address issues such as:

- **Implications of trauma-related childhood experiences**
- **School and family partnerships to support student wellness**
- **Impacts of stress and anxiety on learning**

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Gatherings, events, and extracurricular activities will be limited to those where social distancing can be maintained. Many afterschool activities will need to be cancelled due to cleaning and disinfecting requirements and to allow faculty and staff members time to plan for the increased instructional demands of teaching in this new environment.



TECHNOLOGY

A plan for individual student and staff use of technology tools will be established and implemented. Recommendations include:

- **Individually assigned technology materials for student/staff use.**
- **If individually assigned tools are not available, schools should limit the use to a specified group (student cohort) and the equipment should be wiped down per manufacturers' guidelines between uses.**
- **Limit the use of classroom interactive technology such as SMART and Promethean Boards, BenQ and JTouch Panels, etc.**

More than 1,000 AMX Acendo Vibe camera/sound bar units have been purchased for Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. This technology will enable educators to present synchronous instruction to students who are learning at home and in the classroom. Training sessions — involving mock classes with teachers providing synchronous instruction to participants at home and in the classroom— have been implemented so that faculty are able to “test drive” this new method.



Purchasing recommendations have been researched, created and shared with schools regarding on-campus and off-campus infrastructure and devices.

TRANSPORTATION

DROP-OFF/PICK-UP PROCEDURE

Each school will establish pick-up/drop-off procedures that follow the social distancing guidelines. Recommendations include:

- **Visual cues or barriers to direct traffic flow and distancing.**
- **Staggering arrival and drop-off times.**
- **Limit direct contact with parents. Parents/caretakers should stay in the car and only students will exit the vehicle.**
- **Students will go from car to classroom, no congregating.**
- **Hand sanitizing stations will be placed at school entrances, so that children and staff can clean their hands before entering the building.**

BUSING

To mitigate the transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19, a plan for disinfecting and social distancing for students on school-operated buses and third-party vendor busing will be established and implemented. Recommendations include:

- **Third-party vendors should provide a protocol to schools on how sanitizing and social distancing will be maintained to mitigate risk.**
- **Schools that own buses should have a plan for sanitizing and social distancing to mitigate risk.**
- **Social distancing recommendations should be followed (e.g. one student per seat, every other seat).**

ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS PLANNING AHEAD TASK FORCE

Planning Ahead Task Force Chairs

James B. Sellinger, *Chancellor of Education*

Dr. Donna Hargens, *Superintendent of Catholic Schools*

Planning Ahead Task Force Committee Leads

Tom Alban, *Director of Risk Management*

COVID-19 Response Committee

Denise Ball, *Associate Superintendent*

Social Distancing, Facilities, and Operations Committee

Dr. Eric Watts, *Chief Academic Officer*

Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Student Support Services Committee

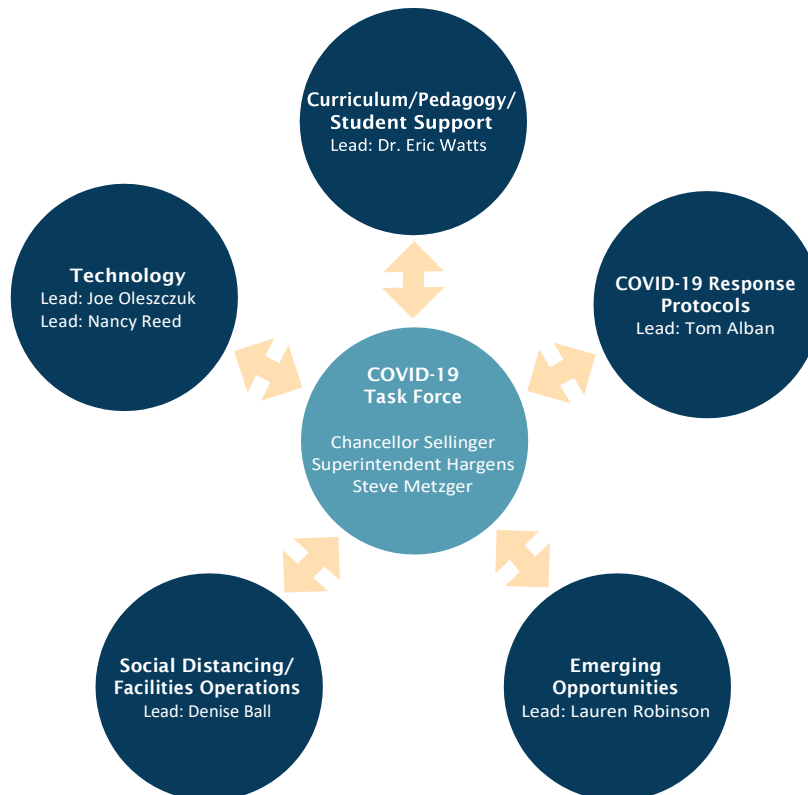
Joe Oleszczuk, *Director of Educational Technology*

Nancy Reed, Technology Integration Specialist

Classroom Technology Committee

Lauren Robinson, *Director of Marketing*

Strategic Communications and Emerging Opportunities Committee



***The Planning Ahead Task Force committees consisted of healthcare professionals, counselors, educators, school leaders, parents, and experts in various applicable fields.*

RESOURCES

GENERAL

**Maryland Together:
Maryland's Recovery Plan for Education**
<http://marylandpublicschools.org/newsroom/Documents/MSDERecoveryPlan.pdf>

**MSDE Office of Child Care
Listening Session 7/7/20**
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1O66VsYYhFBd1y70p5wbgSMkot4ZNvDY1/view?usp=sharing>

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PROVENTION

CDC: Coronavirus (COVID-19)
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV

**CDC: Resources for Childcare,
Schools, and Youth Programs**
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

**CDC: Preparing K-12 School Administrators
for a Safe Return to School in Fall 2020**
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/prepare-safe-return.html>

**CDC: Guidance for K -12 School
Administrators on the use of Cloth Face
Coverings in Schools.**
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/cloth-face-cover.html>

CDC: Prevention
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html

CDC: Hygiene Etiquette
www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html

CDC: Social Distancing

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>

CDC: Sickness Steps

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html

CDC: Screening K-12 Students for Symptoms of COVID-19: Limitations and Considerations.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/symptom-screening.html>

CDC: Reopening Guidance

<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/6883734-CDC-Business-Plans.html>

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)

www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2

