



Planning for the next normal at school

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

Version 2.0

Updated 10/5/2020

Introduction and purpose

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

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

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

Assessing the current school landscape

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

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

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

How to use this playbook

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

Our guidance includes:

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

This guide references complementary playbooks that can also support school reopening and continued learning. However, 2 distinct characteristics set this Planning for the Next Normal at School playbook apart:

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

Staying connected

We'll continue to evolve this content as guidance and circumstances change.

For additional questions, please contact your Kaiser Permanente representative or [submit an inquiry online](#).

How Kaiser Permanente can support you

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

Other helpful resources:

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

Use the following video resources to help drive healthy behaviors that support the health of your community:

- [Together We Thrive \(English\)](#)
- [Together We Thrive \(Spanish\)](#)

Contributing partners



Framework overview

Health dimensions for supporting continued learning in your schools

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

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



Mental health and well-being

Understand how to assess and improve social-emotional health.



COVID-19 prevention

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



Social drivers of health

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



Physical activity, physical education, and health education

Implement strategies to safely provide physical and health education and activities.



Staff and teacher well-being

Address health considerations specific to adults working in your schools.

This playbook prioritizes considerations of policy, equity, family and community engagement, and funding, which can all contribute to a successful and sustainable reopening and continued learning strategy. Utilize the [Quick Start Health Assessment](#) for additional support in identifying and prioritizing these key health considerations.

Table of contents

[Chapter 1: The impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of students and educators](#)

[Chapter 2: Enhancing a prevention strategy during COVID-19](#)

[Chapter 3: COVID-19's effect on the social drivers of health](#)

[Chapter 4: Physical activity, physical education, and health education](#)

[Chapter 5: Staff and teacher well-being](#)

[Chapter 6: Funding and family engagement strategies](#)

Chapter 1

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

With school back in session, students, staff, teachers, and families need ways to process and respond to the impact of this pandemic.

Key takeaways:

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



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Introduction and purpose

From the challenges of virtual learning to homelessness and food insecurities, the COVID-19 pandemic has had widespread repercussions on the health and livelihood of students, staff, teachers, and families. And as stay-at-home restrictions are lifted, education leaders are tasked with managing instructional demands within the context of evolving health concerns.

Mental health and well-being should be a top priority for school leaders to address as they rethink their educational environment. With the right preparation, a healthy, supportive school environment, either in person or virtual, is possible. We're here to help.

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

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

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

COVID-19's lingering impact on education

COVID-19 is having an unprecedented effect on students, staff, teachers, and families. While youth aren't being affected as severely [as other populations](#), they may be significantly impacted by its many mental health consequences. Children and youth are managing more stress at home, have fewer social connections, and are navigating new ways of learning in a virtual environment. Additionally, the pandemic has both exacerbated existing health and education inequities and created [new ones](#), including reduced or inconsistent access to:

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

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



Did you know?

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



Amplifying stressors on students and education leaders

Many students, staff, teachers, and family members may enter schools with mental and physical health issues resulting from stay-at-home orders. They may also carry concerns about how to properly protect themselves from COVID-19, navigate changes in school environments, and manage virtual learning.



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

- School funding
- Workforce retention
- Academic progress and well-being



Students may be dealing with evolving family concerns like:

- Job loss and lack of social connection
- Food and housing insecurity
- Uncertainty about the future
- Navigating virtual learning
- Undue impact on undocumented and immigrant families

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

Magnifying adverse childhood experiences

Pre-COVID-19, over 60% of children in the United States faced at least one [adverse childhood experience](#) (ACE) by age 18. Research shows that these experiences can disrupt student learning and behavior in the classroom, as well as put students at increased risk for mental and physical health conditions throughout their lifetimes.

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

- Racism
- [Structural drivers of inequity](#)
- Social health disparities
- Discrimination based on [sexual orientation](#) or gender identity
- Anti-immigrant xenophobia



Did you know?

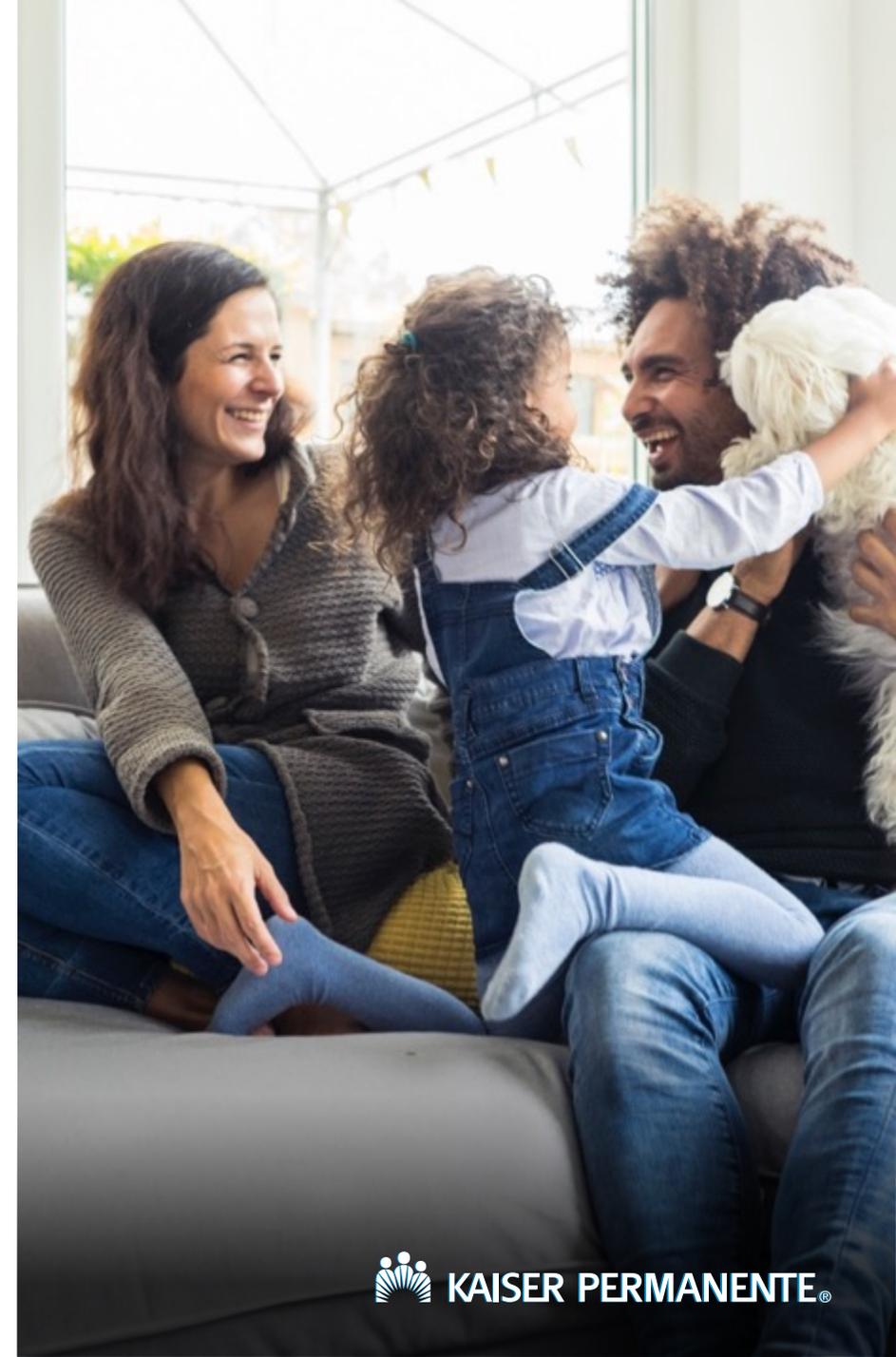
Repeatedly experiencing adversity can result in negative educational, physical, and mental health outcomes throughout a person's life and across generations.



Disconnecting from prior support systems

Disrupted support systems, feelings of isolation, reduced access to health and dental care, and lack of safety all contribute to poor social-emotional health. Although every public health disaster carries the risk of increasing childhood trauma, COVID-19 can magnify traumatic experiences on a large scale for some people.

- Families are managing health risks and struggling to access necessities, such as food, housing, and employment.
- The continued closure of many businesses, workplaces, and schools find many families both physically distant from everyday support and cohabitating in often challenging physical and emotional environments.
- Students, staff, teachers, and families living in environments that are unstable — and often unaccepting — are unable to seek previously relied-upon refuge at their schools, nor able to access food and mental health supports.



Amplifying disparities within underrepresented communities

As with all adversities, COVID-19's effects are worsened by existing structural inequities, causing a disproportionate, compounding effect for many communities. These effects can negatively impact a person's social-emotional health and increase a sense of loss and anxiety among communities of color and other populations experiencing inequities, including but not limited to:



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



Asian American communities are facing [stigma, xenophobia, and hate crimes](#).

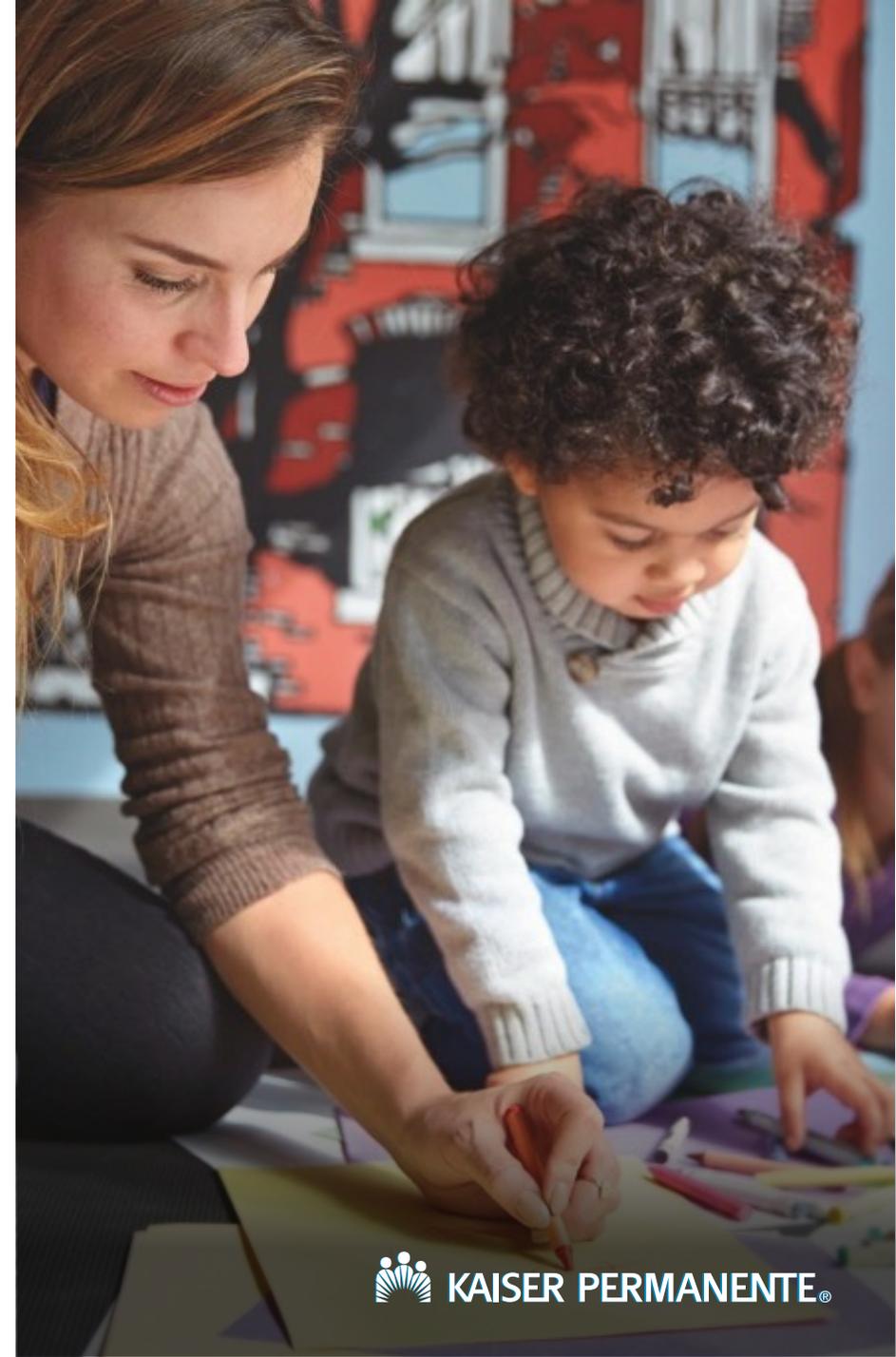


Students with disabilities and underlying health conditions are dealing with [a disruption in needed support and services](#), creating further academic disparities for these individuals. Their families and caregivers are also dealing with [higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress](#).

Building a resilient foundation for a successful school year

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

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

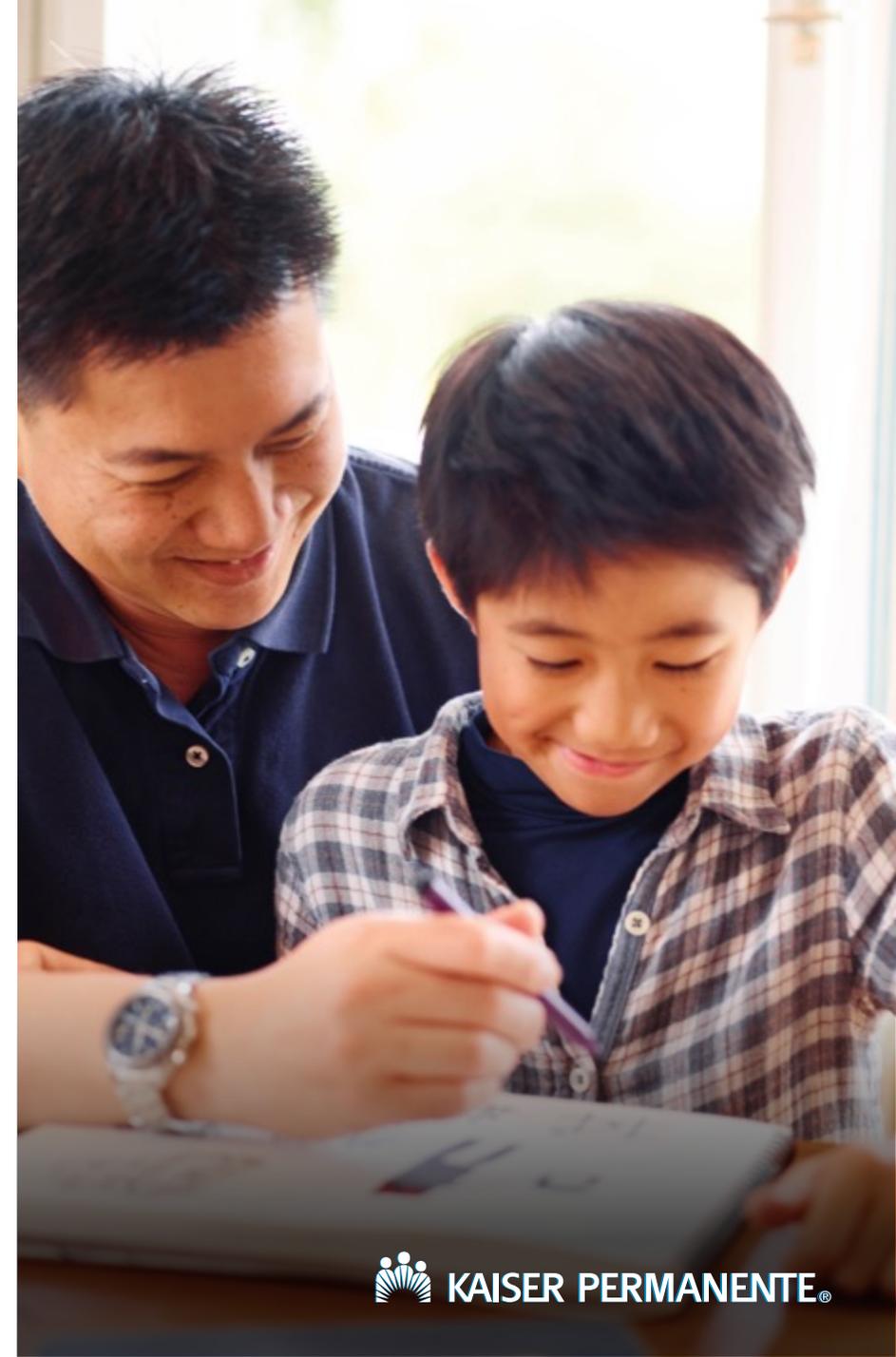


Prioritizing strategies and practices that support mental health and well-being

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

The presence of a single caring adult in a young person's life can have a [profound influence](#) on their physical, social, and mental health. As the front-line representatives of your school, staff and teachers will soon be presented with a unique opportunity to help their students take on new challenges.

However, it's also important to recognize that your faculty members might need additional support and training to properly address the diverse and changing needs of their students. (See [Chapter 5](#) for strategies specific to staff and teacher well-being.)



5 starter plays for enhancing mental health and well-being

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



1. Community-building activities

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



2. Trauma-informed training

Prioritize continuous professional learning on implementing trauma-informed practices.



3. Open discussions on environmental stressors

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



4. Social-emotional skill building

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



5. Mental health support services

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

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



1. Community-building activities

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

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

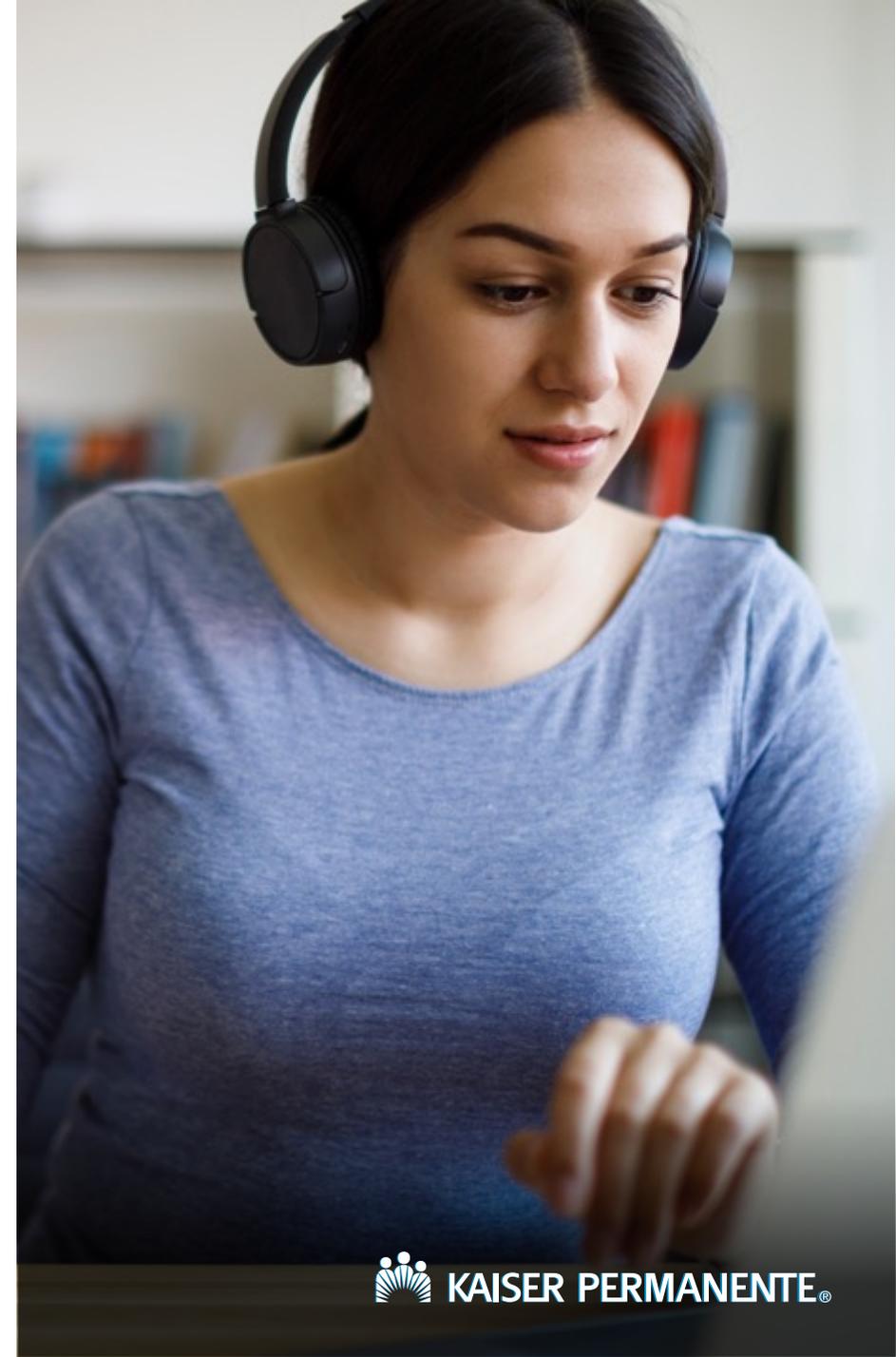




2. Trauma-informed training

Prioritize continuous professional learning on implementing trauma-informed practices.

- [Provide all staff professional learning opportunities.](#)
- Review and revise school [policies and procedures](#) to be more trauma-informed and adapted to a virtual context.
- Adapt school discipline policies to ensure equity, flexibility, and a focus on teaching rather than punishing.
- Create collaborative opportunities for staff and teachers to [observe each other and provide feedback.](#)
- [See more.](#)

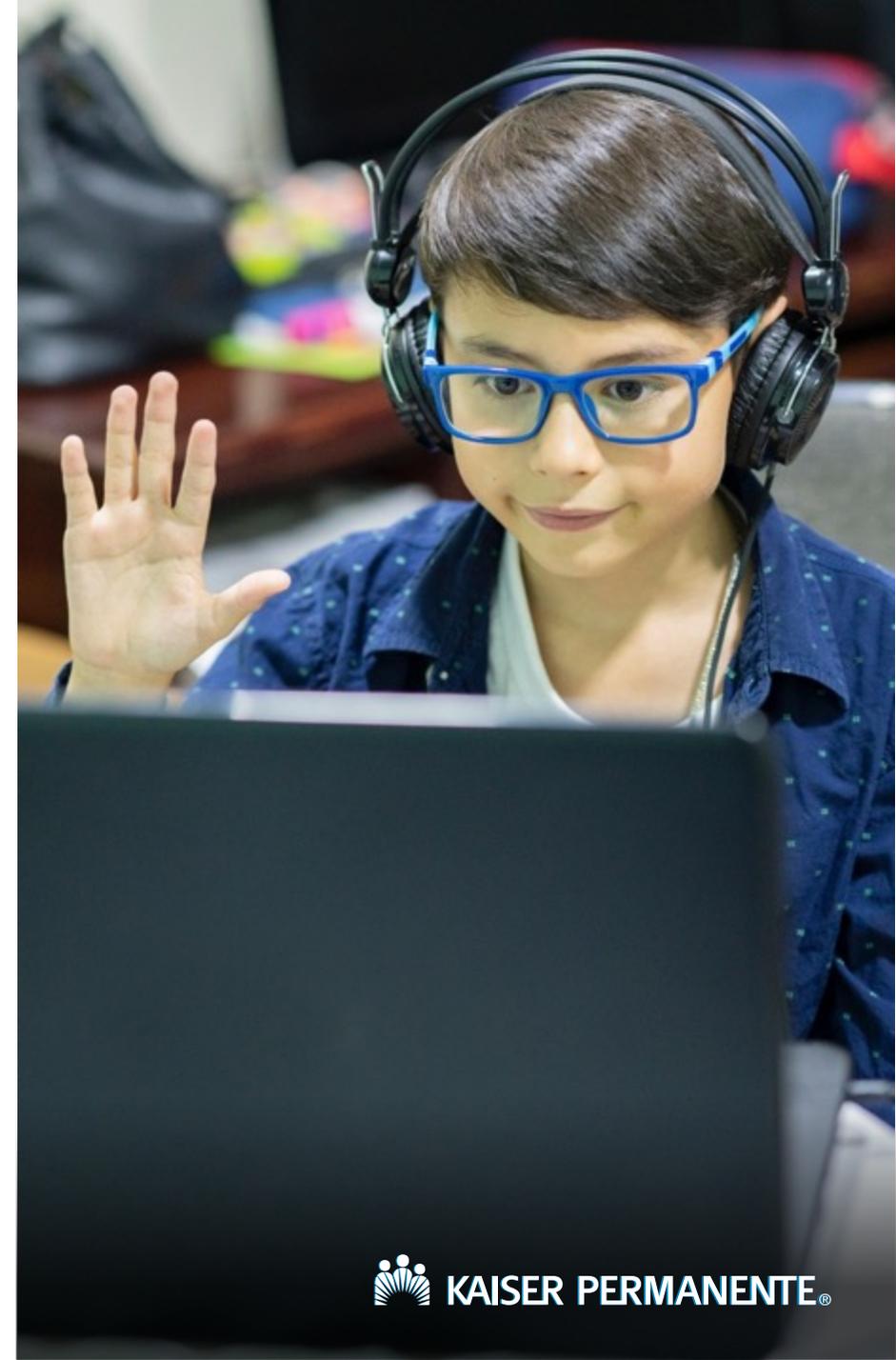




3. Open discussions on environmental stressors

Encourage students, staff, and teachers to talk about environmental stressors (for example, masks, illness, physical distancing, virtual and hybrid learning) that might cause emotional distress and worsen existing trauma reactions — as well as broader issues including systemic racism and economic and environmental crises.

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





4. Social-emotional skill building

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

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

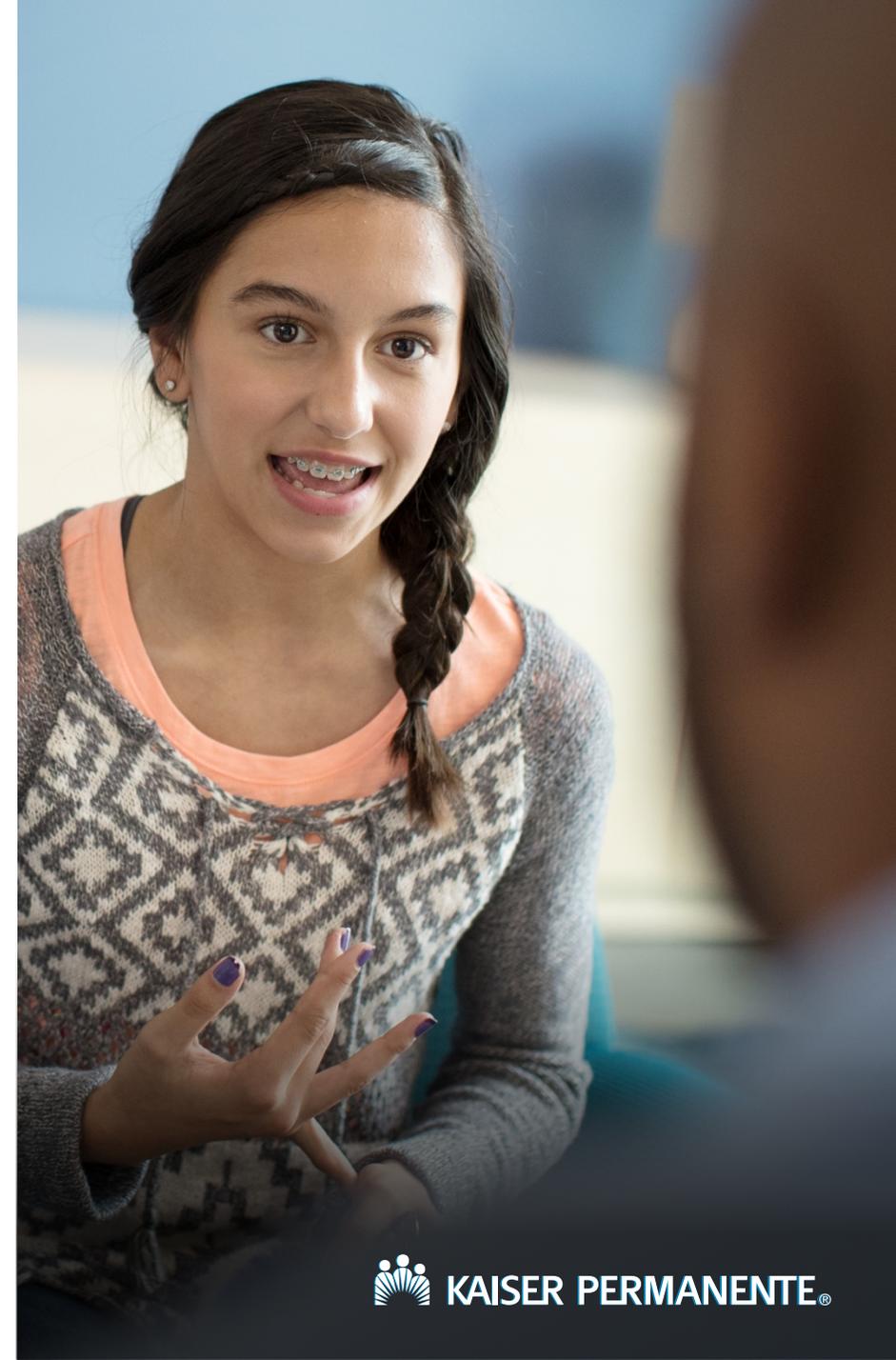




5. Mental health support services

Develop a clear and consistent process for [identifying and supporting individuals](#) in need of additional mental health intervention and support.

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



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

These plays are useful in both in-person and virtual learning environments.

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



1. Community-building activities

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



2. Trauma-informed training

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



3. Open discussions on environmental stressors

- Build in time to practice new routines (for example, teaching handwashing, no-touch practices, and virtual high-fives).
- Build in time during the day to allow students to express and process emotions.
- Engage in [curricular opportunities](#) that promote equity, diversity, and inclusion.



4. Social-emotional skill building

- Build in time during the day for [connecting and building relationships](#).
- Introduce coping strategies that students can apply to those experiences.
- [Integrate practices that promote social-emotional skills](#) (for example, “mindful minutes” in between activities).
- Provide a [calming space](#) or set of strategies for students to de-stress.
- Work with parents and families [to support social and emotional learning in the home](#).



5. Mental health support services

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

Additional district and school administrator resources

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

- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
 - [SEL in Homes and Communities](#)
 - [CASEL Resource Center for School Districts](#)
 - [CASEL Resource Center for Schools](#)
- National Conference of State Legislators
 - [Boosting Social and Emotional Development In and Out of School](#)
- ChangeLab Solutions
 - [Blueprint for Changemakers — Achieving Health Equity Through Law & Policy](#)
- Collaboratory on School & Child Health
 - [Responding to COVID-19: Planning for Trauma-Informed Assessment in Schools](#)
- Alliance for a Healthier Generation
 - [Back-to-school resources](#)
- National Center for School Mental Health
 - [Advancing Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems: Guidance From the Field](#)
 - [School mental health COVID-19 resources](#)
- National Association of School Psychologists
 - [COVID-19: Family & Educator Resources](#)
- UCSF HEARTS: Healthy Environment and Response to Trauma in Schools
 - [COVID-19 Resources](#)
- National Association of School Nurses
 - [COVID-19 Resources for School Nurses](#)
- Kaiser Permanente
 - [Resilience in School Environments: Understanding and Practice \(RISE UP\) virtual workshop for teachers, staff, and administrators](#)
- Child Trends
 - [COVID-19 Recovery Presents an Opportunity to Fill Critical Gaps in Knowledge About Equipping Schools to Address Trauma](#)
 - [School-based Health Centers Can Deliver Care to Vulnerable Populations During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Chapter 2

Enhancing a prevention strategy during COVID-19

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

Key takeaways:

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



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Introduction and purpose

Districts and schools — as well as the staff, teachers, and students who attend them — are on the front line of the pandemic and will play a critical role in COVID-19 prevention. While the goal is for all schools to return to in-person learning, it may not be possible for most at this time. However, it's imperative to continue planning and thinking about how to involve teachers, staff, and families. By engaging these key individuals in your decision-making related to developing your prevention plan, you'll help promote better health across your school environments.

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

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

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

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

Identifying deficiencies and inequities

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

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

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



Accessing existing prevention measures

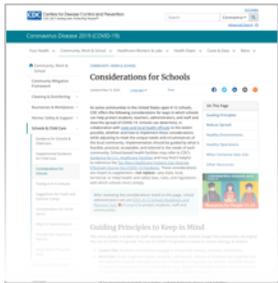
The CDC and other national experts continue to develop and update recommendations to help schools continue in-person learning. These recommendations address key mitigation strategies for COVID-19 prevention, such as hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, physical distancing, use of face masks, and scheduling options to reduce the number of students within school buildings. Additionally, local public health guidance can offer useful resources to complement national guidance.

We must learn and understand the facts about the coronavirus to effectively promote adoption of evidence-based strategies and to help ensure needed partnerships and resources are in place to help schools safely reopen and remain open.



Leveraging CDC resources

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



[Considerations for Schools](#)

This foundational CDC resource includes recommendations to help keep communities safe as K-12 schools and summer day camps gradually scale up activities.



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

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



[Preparing for a Safe Return to School](#)

This lays out the evidence about kids' infectivity and the impact of reopening schools in other countries. It also lays out the importance of school for students, with emphasis on mental, social, and emotional health.

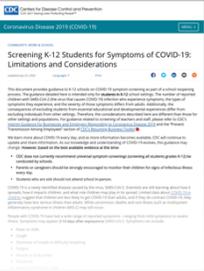
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Leveraging CDC resources *(continued)*



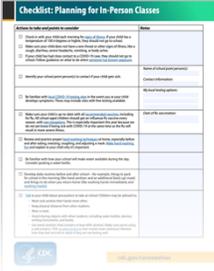
[Cloth Face Coverings](#)

This guidance contains more details about the use of masks within school environments.



[Screening K-12 Students for Symptoms of COVID-19](#)

This document covers screening limitations and considerations.



[School Decision-Making Tool](#) and [Checklists for Families](#)

Share these with parents, caregivers, and families as they decide about returning to school.



[COVID-19 Indicators for School Decision-Making](#)

New! This resource can help you make dynamic decisions about in-person learning as local conditions evolve throughout the pandemic.

Enhancing your prevention strategy by building on CDC best practices

We know that every school is different. To help ensure your school districts and schools have the capacity to implement the CDC's best practices, you may need to build on and adjust their recommendations, as well as engage with your local public health agency as a key partner. By planning early for how you'll use staff trainings, union collaboration, and family engagement protocols, you'll be able to strengthen your prevention plans even further.



Staff trainings

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



Labor union collaboration

Working together with labor unions can help address the needs of your staff and teachers, establish an agreed-upon communications strategy, lessen confusion, and increase your impact to support employee health and well-being.



Family engagement

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

5 starter plays for enhancing your COVID-19 prevention strategy

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



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



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



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



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



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



1. Provide staff and teachers with training opportunities

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



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

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





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

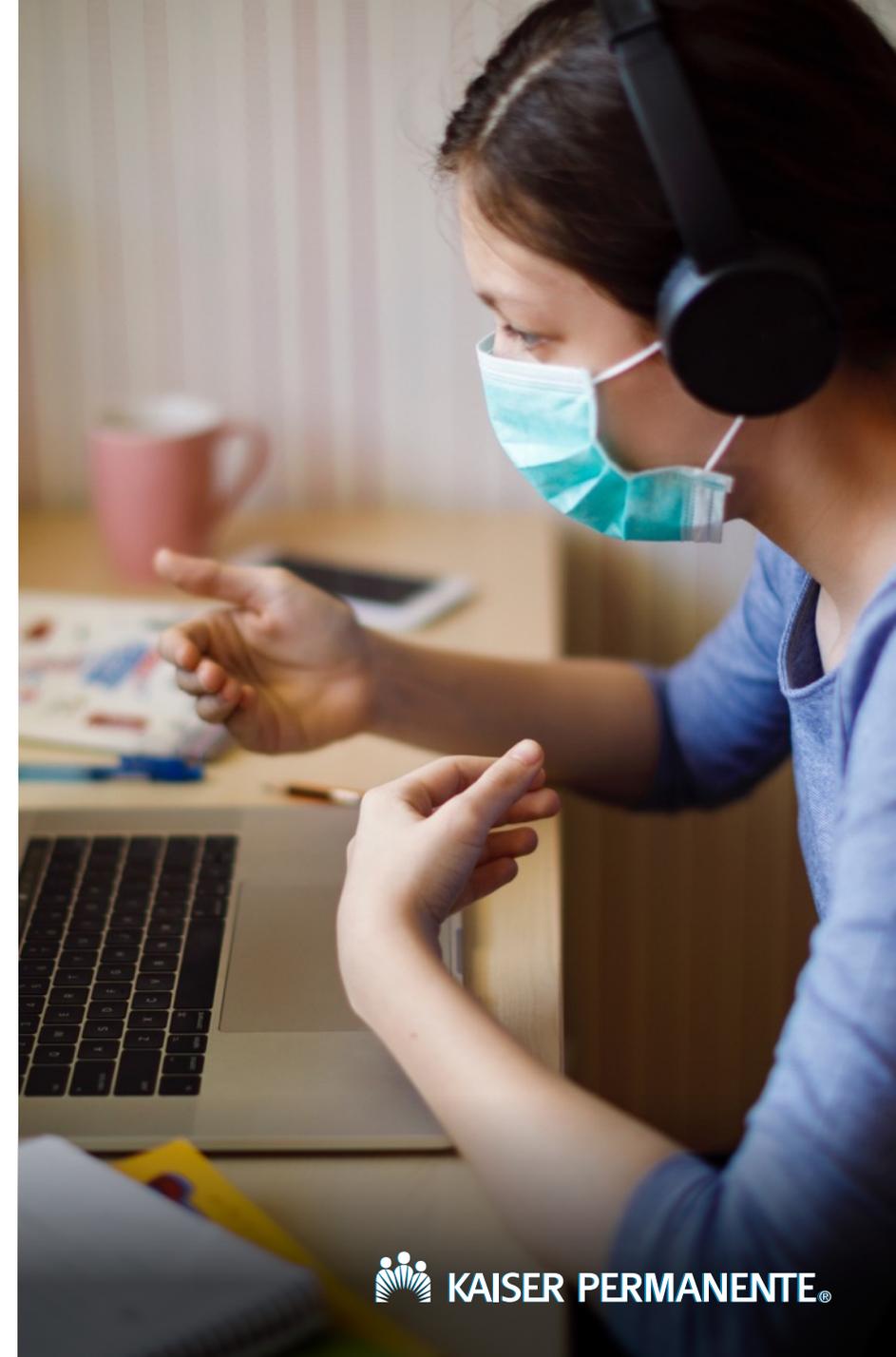
- [Actively seek family input in your school's operating plans](#) by inviting families to planning meetings, sending out surveys, and having conversations with individual parents and caregivers.
- Inform families about when to send their children to school and about safety protocols in place (for example, student mask policies and visitor limits in school buildings) to help keep their children safe at school. Provide guidance on how/who to contact with questions or concerns about school reopening.
- Communicate what's required for students to return to school (for example, annual well-child visits, immunizations, screenings, and testing) and school district plans for switching between virtual and in-person learning depending on school and public health data.
- Share [key resources](#) and [guidance](#) families can use to speak with their children about COVID-19.
- Inform families about programs and services that are and aren't available at school. It's critical for your communication to be inclusive of all communities.
- Conduct parent and family surveys, focus groups, or virtual town hall meetings to collect feedback on your prevention strategy and evaluate success.





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

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





5. Destigmatize COVID-19

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



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

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



1. Provide staff and teachers with training opportunities

- Train staff and teachers on policies and procedures and [how to discuss them](#) with students and families.
- Educate yourself, and then your staff, about COVID-19 transmission, symptoms, and effects on local communities.
- Speak with staff and teachers about employee sanitation and train them on [how to establish physical space](#) in classrooms and hallways.
- Use data on attendance, student engagement, student health records, and public health data to identify student support opportunities.
- Establish a process for raising questions and sharing feedback about COVID-19 policy changes.



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

- Plan and implement COVID-19 prevention strategies in partnership with school staff, such as nurses and other [specialized instructional support personnel \(SISP\)](#) health and physical education teachers, and custodial staff.
- Develop plans for supporting populations at high risk for COVID-19.
- Work with facility and maintenance staff to make sure proper air ventilation, filtration, and [cleaning and disinfecting procedures](#) are in place.



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

- [Seek family input in your school's operating plans](#) and conduct surveys and virtual town halls to collect ongoing feedback.
- Inform families about when to send their children to school, safety protocols, and who to contact with questions or concerns.
- Communicate what's required for students to return to school, like well-child visits, immunizations, screenings, and testing.
- Share [resources](#) to help families speak with their children about COVID-19 and inform them about available school programs and services.



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

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



5. Destigmatize COVID-19

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

Additional district and school administrator resources

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

Chapter 3

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

Understanding the social drivers that impact the health of your students, staff, teachers, and families will play a crucial role in supporting your community this school year.

Key takeaways:

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



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Introduction and purpose

Link not functional

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

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

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

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

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

- Born
- Grow
- Live
- Learn
- Work
- Age

Identifying the social drivers of health

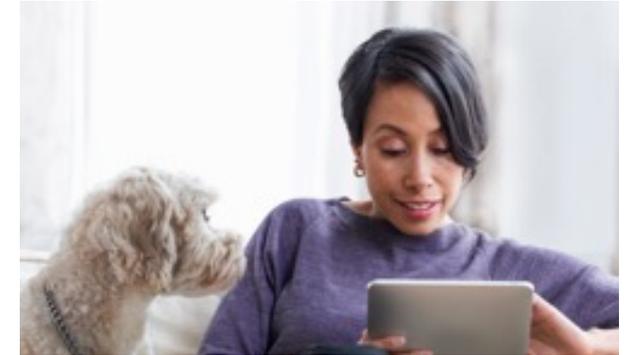
The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced how difficult it is for many community members to get what they need to be healthy. Most of the factors that support health exist outside the doctor's office, like:



Housing



Food security



Economic opportunities

Understanding the impact of racism on social drivers

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

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

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

Connecting students to vital resources

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

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



Enough food to eat



Safe places to live



Solutions to address their other needs

Establishing a network of support

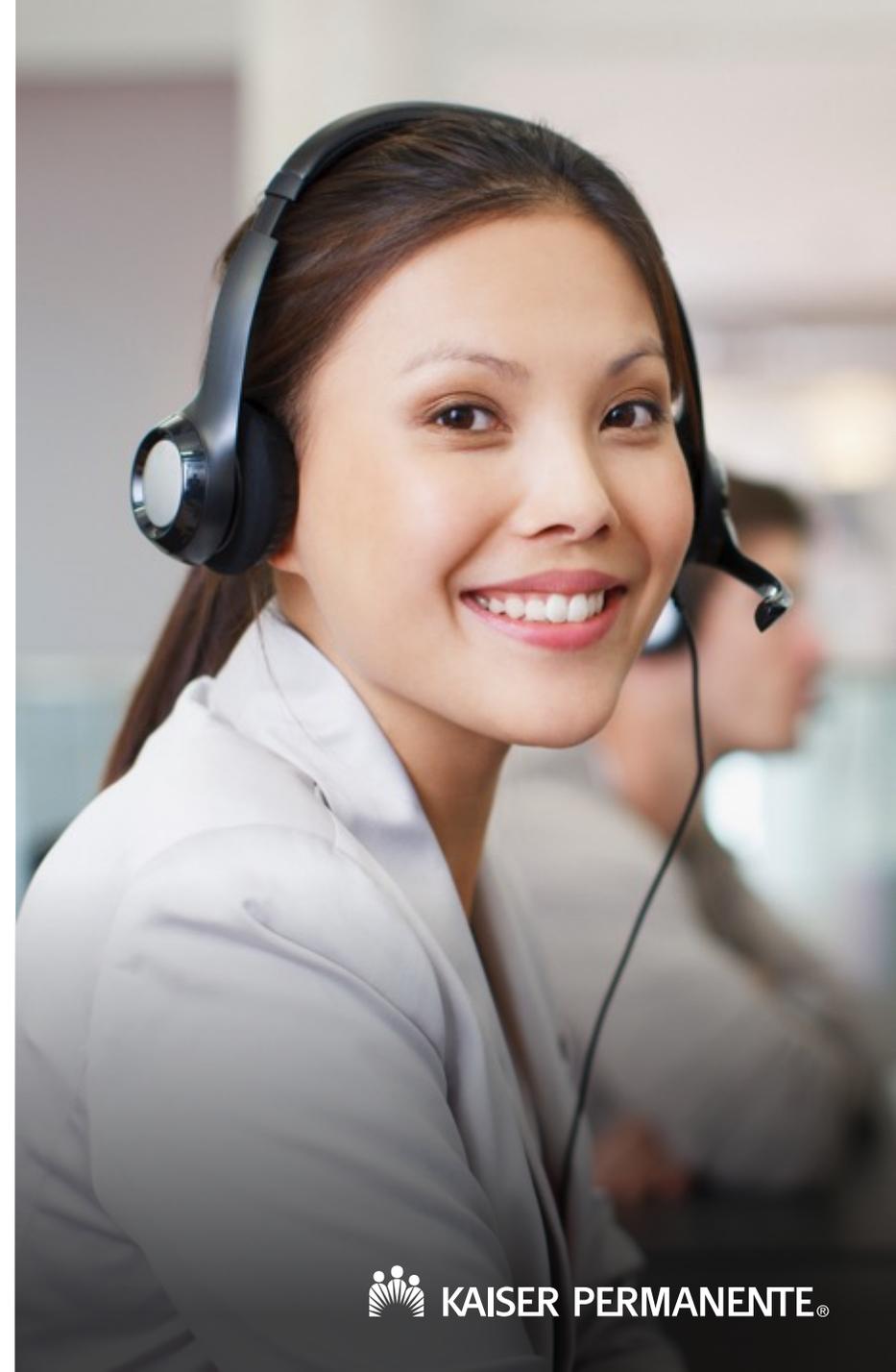
Whether in person or virtual, schools are critical places to address the learning and teaching barriers caused by food insecurity, housing instability, and other social drivers of health. As centers of learning and touchpoints for social support services, they're also the ideal place to support students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

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



Did you know?

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



5 starter plays for affecting the social drivers of health for school communities

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



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



2. Connect your community to resources for food security



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



4. Connect families or staff experiencing homelessness to housing resources



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

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



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

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

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





2. Connect your community to resources for food security

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

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



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

In 2014, a federal policy change vastly expanded the number of school-based health services that can be reimbursed by Medicaid. In several states, school districts can receive reimbursement for services they deliver to Medicaid-enrolled students. [Check here to see if your state is eligible.](#)

Many families could use help accessing the services and benefits they're eligible to receive. Schools and school districts could help by:

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

Note: [The new 2020 public charge rule is suspended during the pandemic.](#) This allows immigrant families to access Medicaid and other programs without threatening their green card status.





4. Connect families or staff experiencing homelessness to housing resources

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





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

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



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

These plays are useful in both in-person and virtual learning environments.

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



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

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



2. Connect your community to resources for food security

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



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

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



4. Connect families or staff experiencing homelessness to housing resources

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



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

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

Additional district and school administrator resources

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

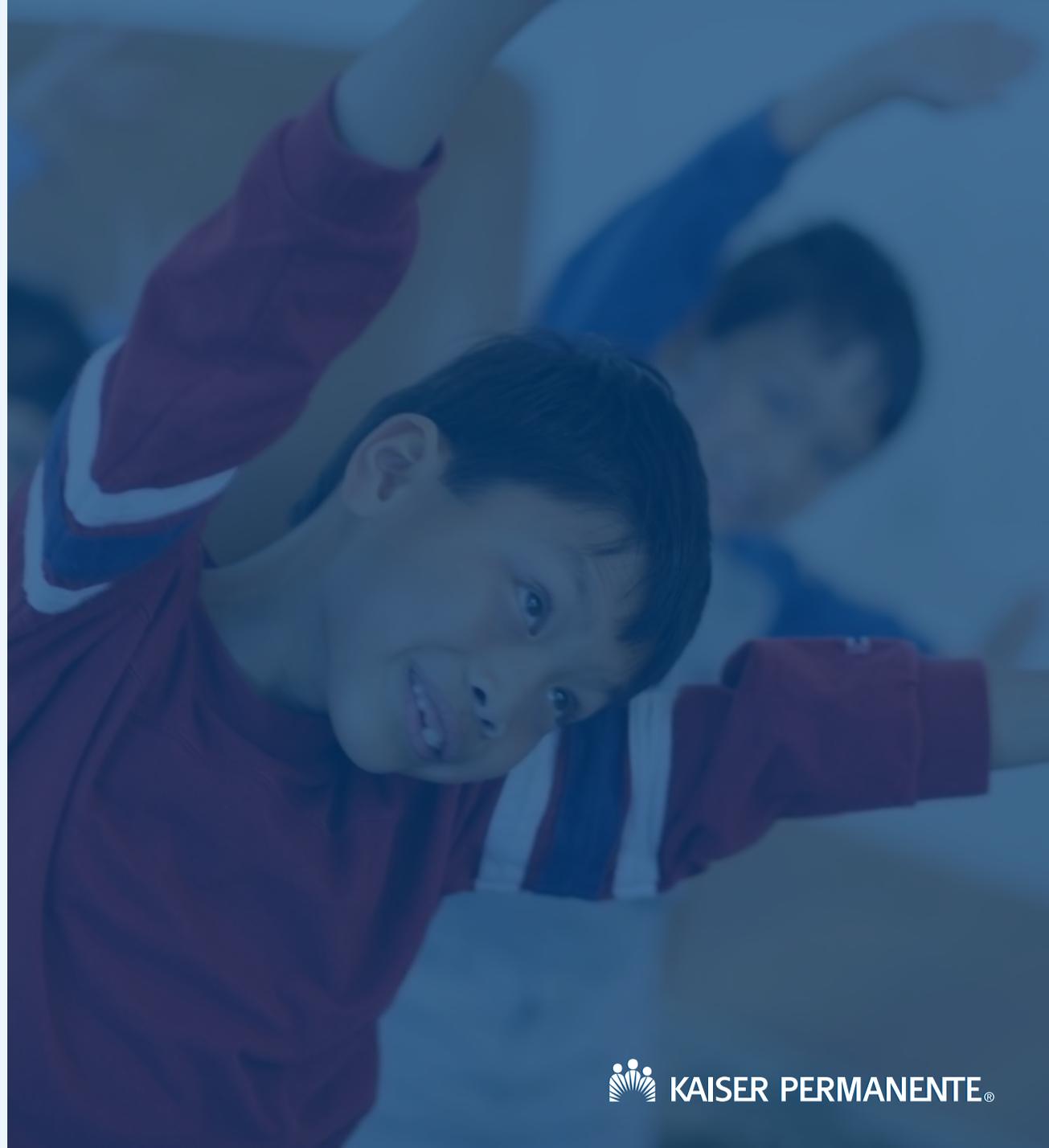
Chapter 4

Physical activity, physical education, and health education

With schools in session, continuing physical activity, physical education, and health education will be essential in providing a well-rounded program.

Key takeaways:

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



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Introduction and purpose

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

Physical activity, physical education, and health education should continue to hold a place in any new models of learning that school leaders build as they rethink their educational environment. With the right context and guidance, school staff and teachers can provide students with the physical activity and physical education they need to thrive in our next normal. The need for students to develop the skills necessary to engage in healthy behaviors, which are taught through comprehensive health education, also takes on a whole new meaning during this global health crisis.

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

- Guidance on the physical activity, physical education, and health education challenges your students might be facing
- Recommendations on how to adapt physical activity, physical education, and health education for all models of learning for students, families, and staff
- 5 starter plays for implementing physical activity, physical education, and health education — a framework to help mitigate the challenges COVID-19 presents to these areas of health

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

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

Schools play a vital role in ensuring children and adolescents get the [nationally recommended](#) 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Schools also play a significant role in promoting the health, safety, and well-being of students, as well as helping them establish healthy behaviors that will last a lifetime.

Yet, COVID-19 has:

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



Addressing existing challenges, disparities, and inequities

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



Access: Children may have limited and inconsistent access to physical activity, physical activity equipment, digital devices, the internet, learning materials, specialized instruction, and information from reputable sources about health-promoting behaviors that support COVID-19 mitigation.



Environment: Children living in high-crime neighborhoods are generally less able to meet physical activity recommendations and more likely to participate in high-risk health behaviors that may lead to obesity or unhealthy eating habits. This is due to lack of access to safe places to play, lack of access to healthy foods, and other environmental conditions.



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

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



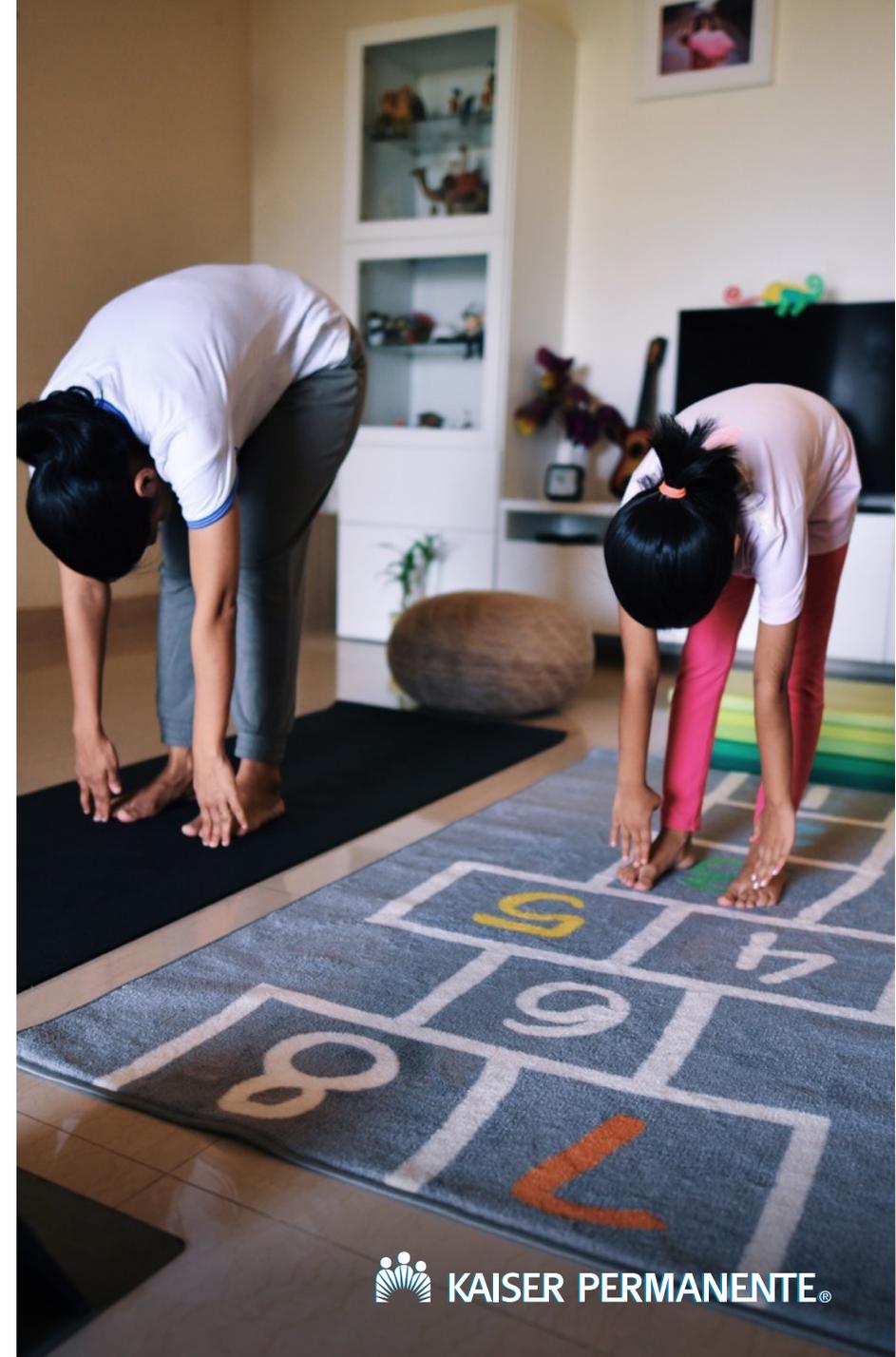
Did you know?

According to the [CDC's 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#), only 23% of high school students participated in at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day during the week, and only 26% attended physical education class daily while in school.

Reinforcing the importance of physical activity, physical education, and health education

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

Whether they're offering in-person or virtual student instruction, schools need to strongly commit to offering physical activity, physical education, and health education as part of the standard school day during COVID-19. These are necessary parts of a well-rounded education that will best support the whole child.



Highlighting the critical need for physical activity, physical education, and health education

Physical education teachers are equipped to teach students how to develop the ability, confidence, and desire to be physically active for life.

Health education teachers are trained to provide students with the opportunity to learn and practice skills necessary to adopt and maintain healthy behaviors related to social and emotional health, disease prevention, decision-making, and accessing valid and reliable resources.

[Physical activity](#) has been shown to:

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

Of course, physical health is only part of the equation. As schools prepare to create new models for learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic, supporting all dimensions of your student's health, including [mental, social, and emotional health](#), is paramount.



Defining physical education

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

Despite other necessary changes amid COVID-19, state and school district wellness policies that require physical education instruction should be implemented with fidelity, during both in-person instruction and virtual learning.

For this reason, certified physical educators are essential. They're trained in providing personalized learning for each student and standards-based instruction to help students achieve grade-level outcomes. Certified physical educators will focus instruction more on individual pursuits rather than team activities where physical contact between students could occur for in-person learning. In the virtual learning environment, they'll adapt activities based on what type of physical activity space and equipment students have access to at home.



Did you know?

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

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

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

Defining health education

A comprehensive, skills-based health education program is a critical component of a well-rounded education for students from pre-K through 12th grade. The goal of health education is to provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to lead healthy lifestyles.

Despite necessary adjustments that schools may have to make, every student should be required to take weekly health education courses — from pre-K all the way through 12th grade — totaling at least 60 hours of instruction per school year.

Certified health educators are equipped to prepare students to become health-literate. This enables students to obtain and apply knowledge and skills to enhance their own health and the health of others — both now and in the future as their needs change.

Effective health education helps students build essential skills that support health-enhancing behaviors.

The 7 key health skills are:

- Analyzing influences
- Accessing valid and reliable resources and services
- Interpersonal communication
- Decision-making
- Goal setting
- Self-management
- Advocacy for self and others

Incorporating social and emotional learning into physical activity, physical education, and health education

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

Health and physical education instruction naturally supports and aligns with the [Core SEL Competencies](#) from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), by offering opportunities for students to learn and practice skills, including:

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

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

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

— [Forbes](#)

Defining physical activity

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

Recess

[Recess](#) shouldn't be eliminated if schools are operating under a model of in-school instruction with physical distancing. Opportunities for physical activity breaks and resources for engaging in physical activity during the school day, within a virtual learning environment, should also be provided to students and caregivers. Recess helps students achieve the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day for children and adolescents, which can improve strength and endurance, enhance academic achievement, and increase self-esteem.

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

(continues)

Recess also helps students' practice social skills, such as:

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

Defining physical activity *(continued)*

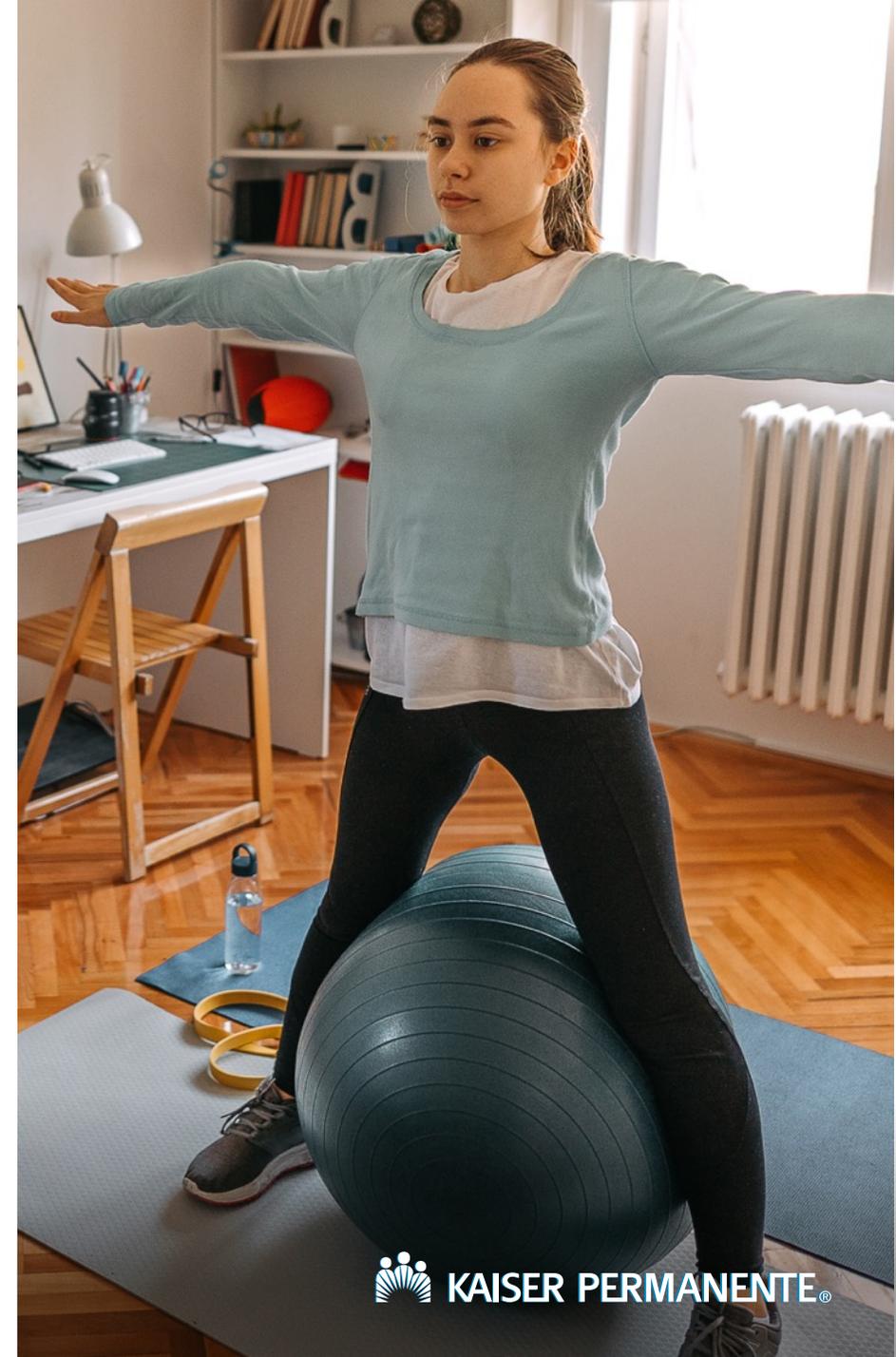
Physical activity breaks

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

Physical activity breaks improve students':

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

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



Adjusting to the new normal

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



5 starter plays for implementing physical activity, physical education, and health education during the school day

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



1. Require physical education and health education instruction

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

Require health education instruction delivered by certified health educators for all students, in both in-person and virtual learning environments.



2. Make necessary accommodations

Make necessary accommodations for health education and physical education instruction to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for staff, teachers, and students. Consider [SHAPE America's recommendations](#) for modifying instruction for both virtual learning and in-person instruction with physical distancing.



3. Provide professional development

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



4. Offer recess in person or virtually

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



5. Offer physical activity in person or virtually

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



1. Require physical education and health education instruction

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

- Ensure inclusion of both health education and physical education instruction time in the master school schedule. Do not allow waivers for health education or physical education class time or credit.
- Health and physical education teachers should conduct an [at-home student survey](#) to design equitable and appropriate learning experiences for their students, especially in the virtual environment. This helps to clearly communicate expectations for student learning and build meaningful relationships with students and their families.
- [Include students with disabilities](#) in both in-person and virtual physical education instruction. Adapt teaching strategies, equipment, environments, and assessments to meet the needs of all students.





2. Make necessary accommodations

Make necessary accommodations to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for staff, teachers, and students.

- For in-person physical education classes, focus on [activities](#) that require no person-to-person contact and limited or no equipment, such as yoga, dance and rhythms, fitness, and kicking or throwing target games, and utilize spaces outside if safe and appropriate. Consider [SHAPE America's recommendations](#) for the [physical environment](#), [personal hygiene](#), [equipment safety and sanitation](#), and [instructional strategies](#).
- For in-person health education classes, follow CDC and local guidance for classroom instruction. Focus content on health decisions, locating and evaluating reliable health information, and other coping skills that may help students.
- For virtual learning physical education classes, focus on [activities](#) that can be done in small spaces with equipment found at home (rolled-up socks as a ball for tossing/catching or a laundry basket as a goal or target).
- For virtual learning health education classes, focus on developing connections with students, communicating expectations, creating consistency, and making content accessible for all learners.





3. Provide professional development

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

Physical education instruction in the virtual environment may require the use of additional technology by physical education teachers, to deliver synchronous and asynchronous instruction and to assess students.

Ensure that health and physical education teachers receive the support, funding, and professional development required to make necessary adjustments to their curriculums.





4. Offer recess in person or virtually

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

When in-person:

- Utilize multiple locations for recess throughout the school and school grounds to reduce the number of students playing in one area.
- Ensure sufficient adult supervision.
- Limit use of play structures or play equipment.

When virtual:

- Physical education teachers and school physical activity leaders should provide students and caregivers with guidance, resources, and [suggested physical activities](#) to help students participate in daily physical activity when learning from home.
- All teachers should schedule time for physical activity within their class time for their students to allow breaks from seat and screen time.

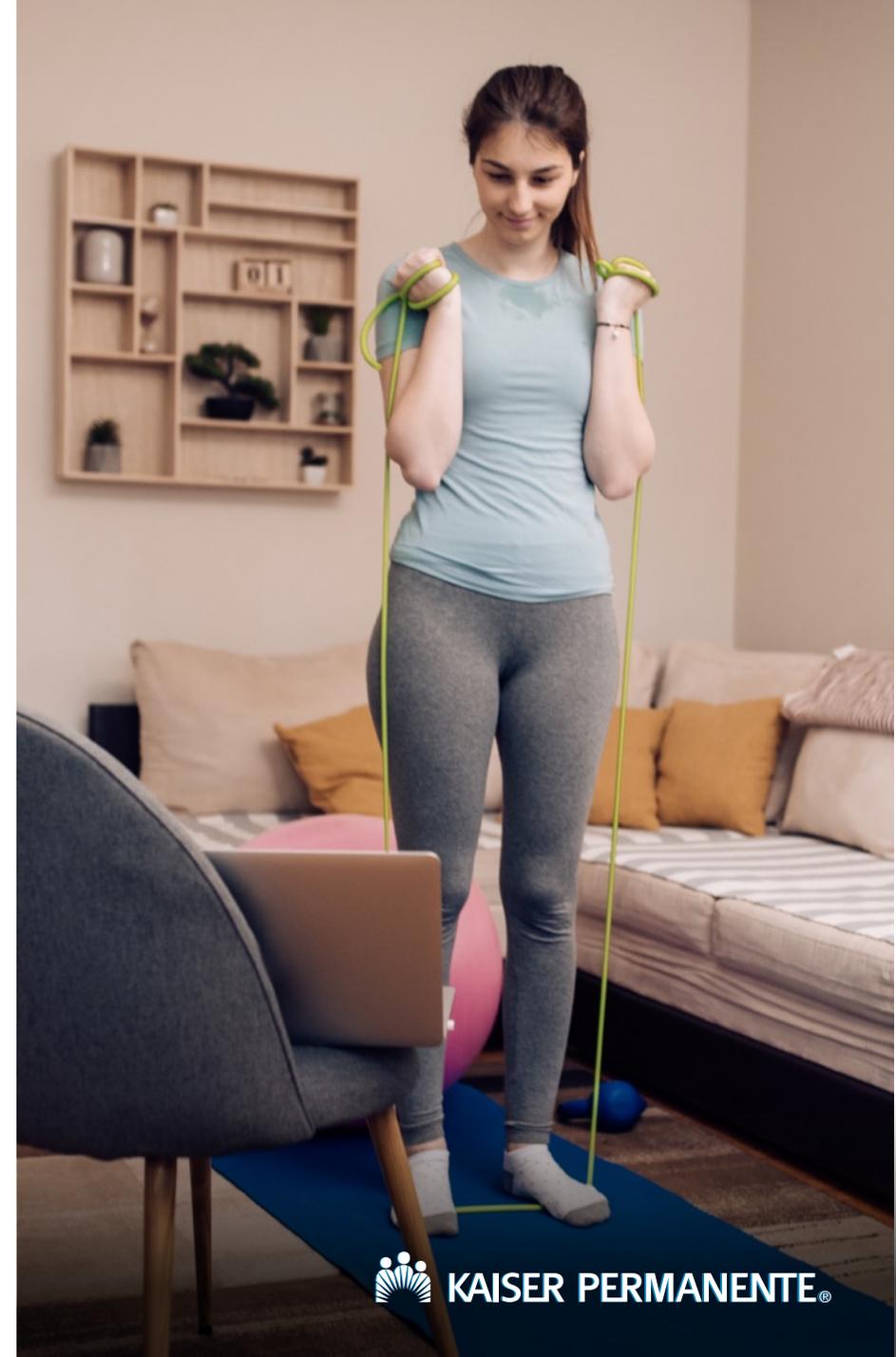




5. Offer physical activity in person or virtually

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

- Provide teachers with example classroom-based [physical activities](#) that can be used to safely increase student engagement, build community within the classroom, and reestablish rapport between students and teachers.
- Increase the emphasis on incorporating physical activity during transitions, the beginning of the school day, and the closing of the school day. These breaks should still be incorporated into virtual learning schedules for all students and grade levels.
- Provide students and caregivers with example [activities](#) that students and families can participate in daily to stay physically active and mentally healthy at home.
- Don't withhold physical activity breaks or require physical activities as disciplinary actions for students.



Checklist: 5 starter plays for implementing physical activity, physical education, and health education

These plays are useful in both in-person and virtual learning environments.

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



1. Require physical education and health education instruction

- Ensure inclusion of health education (HE) and physical education (PE) instruction time in the master school schedule. Don't allow waivers for either.
- PE and HE teachers should conduct [at-home student surveys](#) to design equitable and appropriate learning experiences that build meaningful relationships with students and families.
- [Include students with disabilities](#) in both in-person and virtual PE instruction. Adapt teaching strategies, equipment, environments, and assessments to meet the needs of all students.



2. Make necessary accommodations

- For in-person PE class, focus on [activities](#) that require no person-to-person contact and limited or no physical activity equipment.
- For virtual learning PE class, focus on [activities](#) that can be done in small spaces with equipment found at home.
- For in-person HE class, follow CDC and local guidance for classroom instruction. Focus on health decisions, health information, and coping skills.
- For virtual learning HE class, focus on developing connections with students, communicating expectations, creating consistency, and making content accessible for all learners.



3. Provide professional development

- Provide professional development to PE teachers and recess supervisors on schoolwide COVID-19 prevention protocols, equipment sanitation, and virtual learning strategies.
- PE instruction in the virtual environment may require the use of additional technology by PE teachers in order to deliver synchronous or asynchronous instruction and to assess students.
- Ensure that health and PE teachers receive sufficient support, funding, and professional development to make necessary adaptations to their curriculums.



4. Offer recess in person and virtually

- Utilize multiple locations for recess throughout the school and outside to reduce the number of students playing in one area.
- Ensure sufficient adult supervision.
- Limit use of play structures or play equipment.
- PE teachers should provide students and caregivers with guidance, resources, and [suggested physical activities](#) to help students participate in daily physical activity when learning from home.
- All teachers should schedule physical activity within their class time for their students to allow breaks from seat and screen time.



5. Offer physical activity in person or virtually

- Provide teachers with examples of classroom-based [physical activities](#) that can be used to safely increase student engagement, build community within the classroom, and reestablish rapport between students and teachers.
- Increase the emphasis on incorporating physical activity during transitions, the beginning of the school day, and the closing of the school day.
- Provide students and caregivers with daily [activities](#) to stay physically active and mentally healthy at home.
- Don't withhold physical activity breaks or require physical activities as disciplinary actions for students.

Additional district and school resources

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

Chapter 5

Staff and teacher well-being

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

Key takeaways:

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



In partnership with



Introduction and purpose

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

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

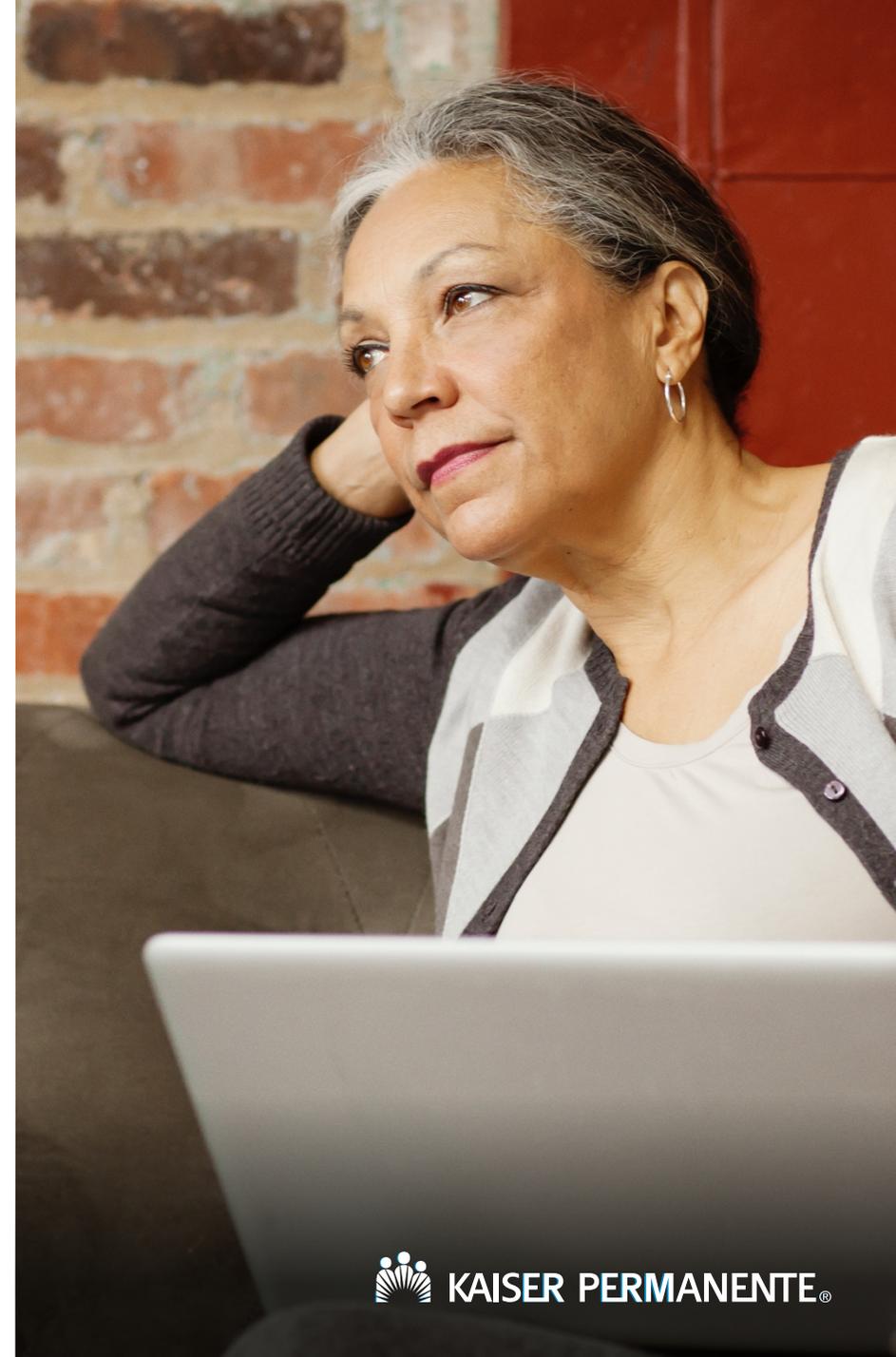
- Guidance on the various stressors challenging your staff and teachers
- Recommendations on how to provide a foundation of support for individuals and groups
- [5 starter plays for enhancing staff and teacher well-being](#) — a framework to help ensure your staff and teachers have the training and resources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

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

COVID-19's impact on existing challenges in education

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

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



The growing roles and responsibilities of educators

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



Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on staff and teachers

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



New public health measures

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



Disproportionately female workforce

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



Aging and vulnerable staff

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



Economic uncertainty

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



Lack of diversity

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

Any one of these demographic amplifiers can create uniquely stressful circumstances for education staff. Staff who [experience an intersection](#) of more than one of these elements may feel stress even more acutely than their peers. Therefore, it's important for schools to address the health and wellness of staff and teachers from a whole-person perspective and consider the unique identities of their education community.

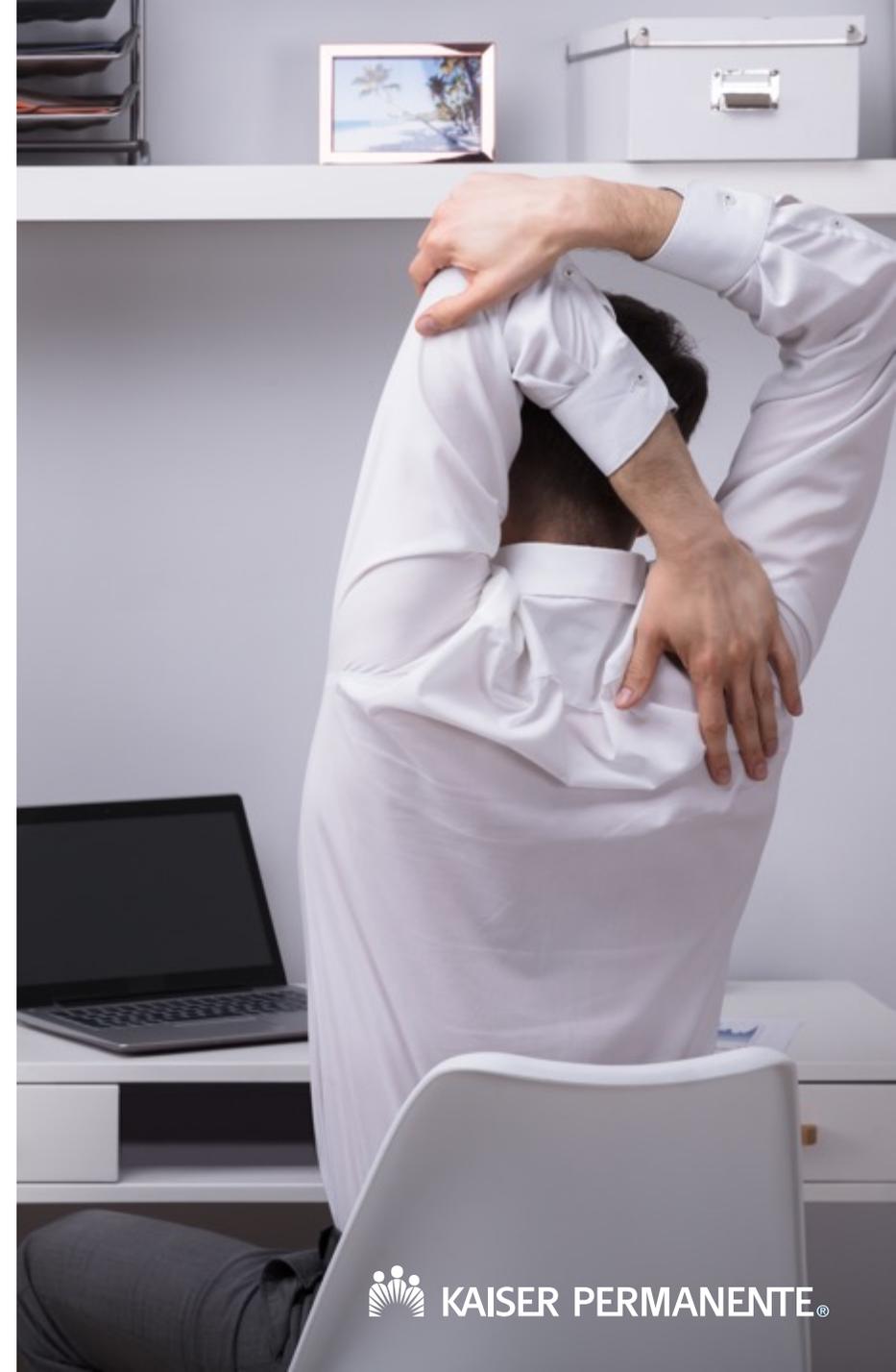
Schools should also regularly reflect on the power dynamics between school stakeholder groups (for example, administrators and teachers, teachers and support staff, etc.) and determine whether practices between and within stakeholder groups add additional stress or promote healthy, healing cultures.

Addressing new and compounding stress factors

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

- Educators are experiencing higher levels of stress as they navigate changes to the learning environment, including virtual technology.
- Stressed staff and teachers are less likely to form positive connections with their students, which can negatively affect student achievement and degrade school culture.
- Stressed specialized instructional support personnel, such as school nurses, psychologists, and counselors, might overlook important risk factors and delay treatment for the students they support.

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



Championing a holistic approach to well-being

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

Workers report greater satisfaction in life when caring for [these](#):



Providing a foundation of support

To do their jobs well, staff and teachers need to feel safe and supported within their work environments. While there are still many unknowns as schools and districts reopen and support continued learning, it's critical to prioritize a culture of well-being in both in-person and virtual settings.

The **5 starter plays for enhancing staff and teacher well-being** can help you get started and ensure that all employees have the emotional, physical, and social resources they need to support themselves and their students.



5 starter plays for enhancing staff and teacher well-being

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



1. Promote equity and collaboration

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



2. Prepare staff

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



3. Foster collective resilience

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



4. Empower personal well-being

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



5. Provide resources

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



1. Promote equity and collaboration

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

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

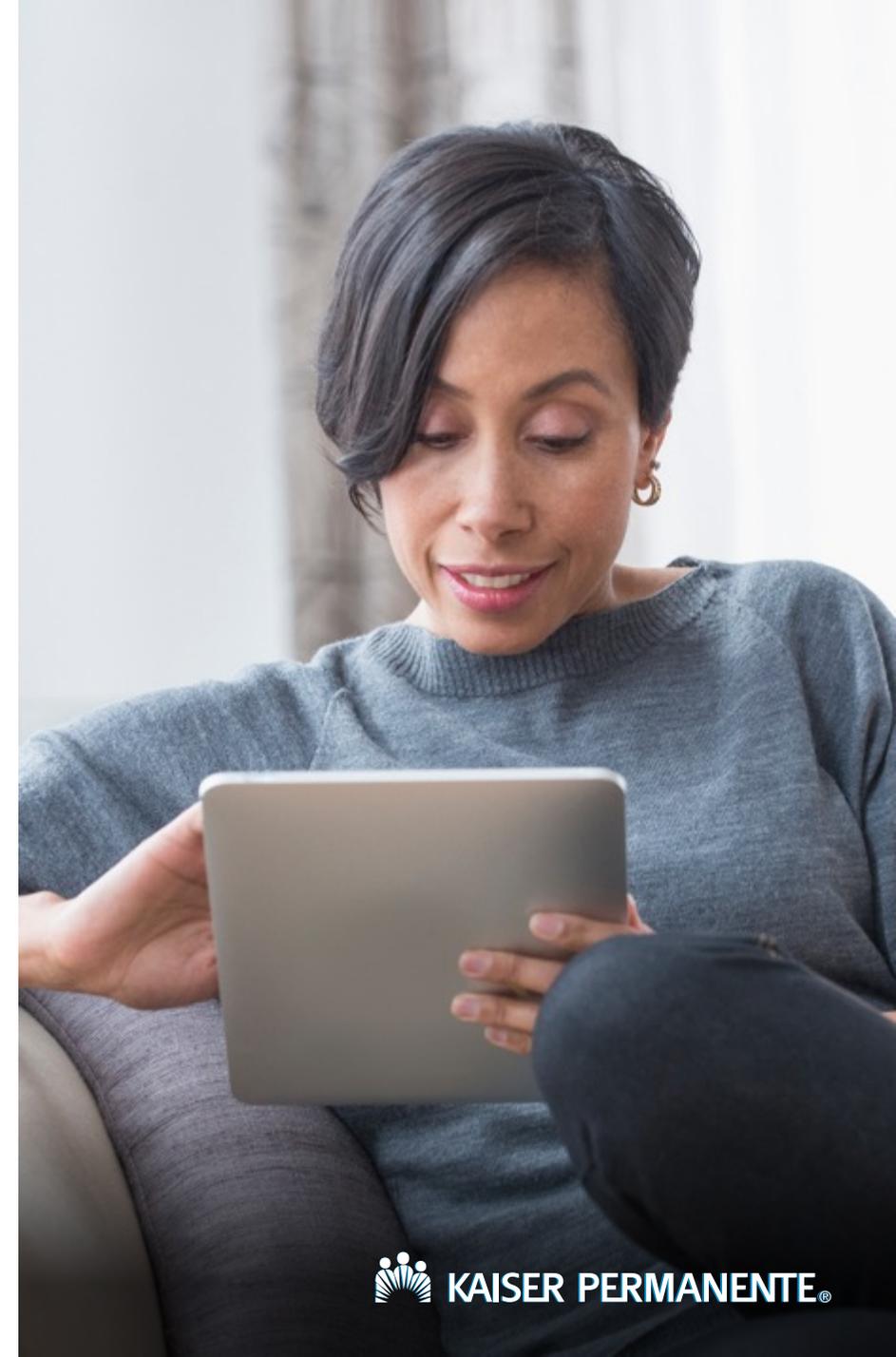




2. Prepare staff

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

- Provide staff and teachers with continuous professional learning opportunities that are specific to their job duties, including:
 - [Virtual learning techniques](#) and technology support
 - Local public health guidance
 - Adjustments to nutrition and transportation services
 - Integrating social and emotional learning supports into academic routines
- [Build processes](#) that promote consistent, ongoing discussion between staff, teachers, and administrators to help them [express emotions](#) (such as anxiety over implementing new procedures) and collaborate on solutions.
- Develop clear and consistent messages that your staff and teachers can share with students, parents, and the school community.

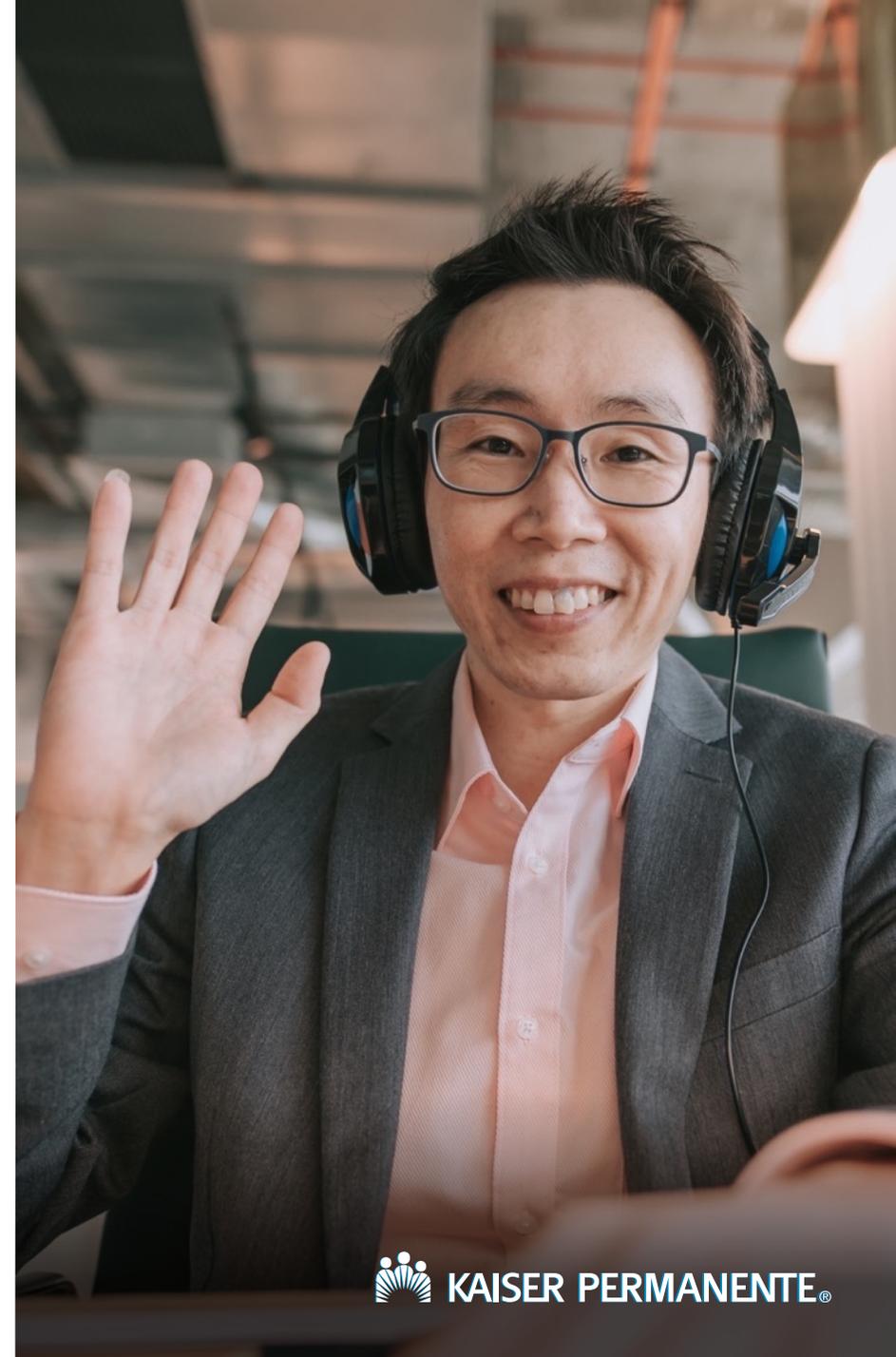




3. Foster collective resilience

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

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

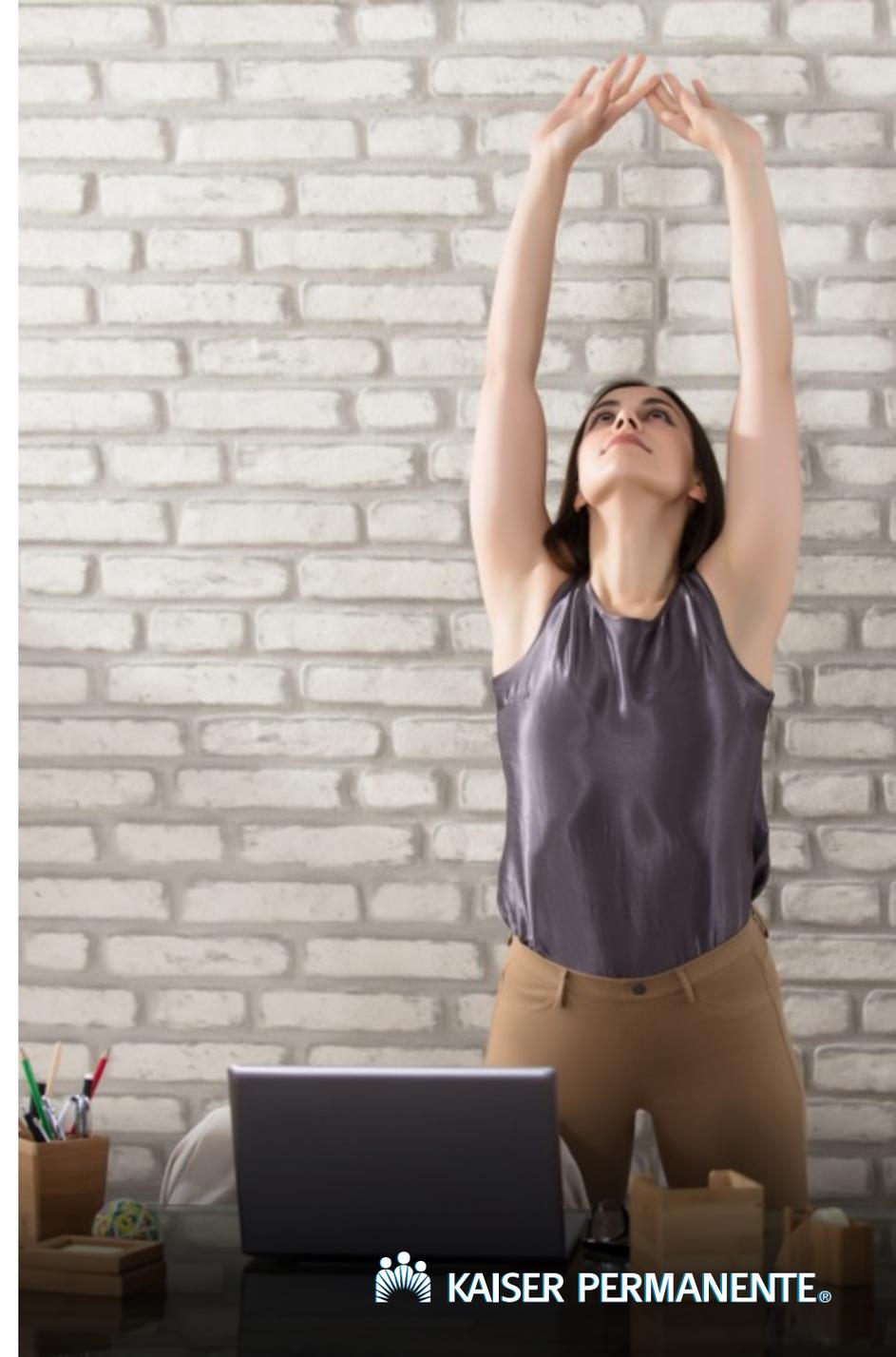




4. Empower personal well-being

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

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





5. Provide resources

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

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



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

These plays are useful in both in-person and virtual learning environments.

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



1. Promote equity and collaboration

- Collaborate with staff, teachers, and local bargaining units on your reopening and continued learning plan and work duties.
- Provide professional learning on COVID-19's impact on your school, particularly equity, [racial justice](#), and health access.
- Gather, review, and address feedback on the effectiveness of your reopening and continued learning plans.



2. Prepare staff

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



3. Foster collective resilience

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



4. Empower personal well-being

- Provide learning opportunities on [burnout](#) and [stress reduction](#).
- Allow staff and teachers to schedule breaks to [care for their well-being](#).
- Set clear and realistic expectations for in-person and virtual working hours.
- Promote healthy work routines.



5. Provide resources

- Promote district-sponsored health offerings.
- Review and revise your [human resource policies](#).
- Connect employees to community and financial-planning resources.

Additional district and school administrator resources

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

Chapter 6

Funding and family engagement strategies

Supporting operations that enable ongoing learning is essential for your strategy.

Key takeaways:

- Understand and utilize funding strategies to support ongoing school operations.
- Support student and family health needs by providing 5 key starter plays for family engagement during the school year.



4 key strategies to consider for funding health

The coronavirus outbreak puts schools and districts in a financial double-bind: They must spend more money to provide the necessary technology, training, and protective equipment to support student health. However, local and state governments that support education are experiencing sharp declines in revenue.

Consider these 4 strategies when thinking about how to access additional funding to support the ongoing health of students, teachers, and staff. These strategies can help sustain school reopenings and continued learning — virtually or in person.

Access our [Thriving Schools site](#) for a comprehensive look at actionable funding strategies and additional resources.



1. Explore availability of federal aid for COVID-19 recovery

Congress has allotted billions of dollars and created regulatory flexibility to support schools amid the coronavirus crisis.



2. Tap existing federal education funding sources

Federal education and social services laws includes several mechanisms for supporting student health.



3. Expand Medicaid reimbursement to schools

With 37% of school-age children benefitting from Medicaid and CHIP,* federal-state partnerships can help pay for health services through schools.



4. Collaborate with local nonprofits and other organizations

The partners that schools rely on to support students and families can also help navigate the coronavirus crisis.

*Wagnerman and Burak, Georgetown University Health Policy Institute, July 18, 2018.

Supporting families during this “next normal”

Families, parents, and caregivers play a critical role in children’s health, no matter when or how schools reopen. During this time, parents and caregivers are being tasked with a near-impossible combination of roles: Working from home — or working away from home as essential workers — while home-schooling, counseling, or navigating child care. These challenges are accompanied by added stress, economic challenges, and more.

In addition, many families continue to experience barriers to engaging with school leaders and staff as a result of cultural differences, language barriers, and systemic racism. As a result, many families may not be comfortable asking questions and sharing concerns about what school and safety looks like for their kids during a pandemic.



A family checklist

We’ve created a [family checklist](#) to help parents and caregivers strengthen communication and relationships with school leaders and staff and support their personal well-being. This checklist shows how they can collaborate with you to make sure kids are safe and healthy, whether school is open in-person or through virtual learning environments.

The checklist provides **five starter plays** centered in dimensions of health that support the needs of their families. We invite you to share this resource with families in your school community.

Instituting a holistic plan for continued learning this school year

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

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

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

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



Survey

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

Two easy options:

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