

Update on Planning to Reopen Vermont Schools for Fall 2020

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Planning for the reopening of school for the fall is underway with the focus on returning to in-person instruction. The cornerstone of this planning will be school safety and health guidance developed by the Department of Health and the Agency of Education in collaboration with school nurses and other educational partner organizations. This guidance should be finalized by mid-June.

From there, the AOE will produce a planning template to guide district-level planning work. A key aspect of this work will be flexibility, and the need to be able to shift school instructional dispositions on a continuum of options from full in-person instruction to full remote learning, including a hybrid approach that might include both.

Districts and approved independent schools are encouraged to use end of year in-service days to engage staff in this instructional planning. Continuity of Learning and remote learning strategies were enacted rapidly as a crisis response to address an immediate public health emergency. We now have the opportunity to reflect on how to improve these strategies in order to support a successful reopening in the fall.

After the safe and healthy school guidance is published in mid-June, the AOE will create a larger planning template to guide district-level preparations for the fall. Currently, that plan template includes the following domains:

1. **Safe and Healthy Environments** –based on guidance developed in cooperation with the Department of Health, the AOE, school nurses and the other educational organizations;
2. **Leadership, Policy and Funding** – local school board policies, procedures, budgeting strategies and communications strategies;
3. **Maintaining Operations** – strategies designed to keep schools open for in-person instruction;
4. **Continuity of Learning** – improving the ability to provide remote learning as a contingency to in-person instruction; and
5. **Social and Emotional Health** – systems to support the social and emotional needs of students and staff.

Districts and approved independent schools will be required to prepare and submit local plans for reopening their schools for in-person instruction in accordance with the state-level planning template. They will need to include a wide variety of stakeholders in their local planning. AOE staff will be available to support districts and approved independent schools in this important work.