

## REOPENING SCHOOLS FOR FALL 2020

Massachusetts PTA understands that the reopening of our nation's preK-12 schools during the COVID-19 pandemic is vital to ensure the continuity of education; however it should not ignore nor outweigh the safety and the mental and physical health of our students, educators, school employees and families.

It is our association's position that plans for reopening shall incorporate the best available science and the expertise of infectious disease doctors and health practitioners. Plans should also strictly follow the most up-to-date Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines, including but not limited to reasonable social distancing, rigorous sanitizing processes viral screening and testing protocols.

Massachusetts PTA believes that states and school districts must plan and align logistics, educational strategies and knowledge alongside public health facts, data and approaches into one coherent response. We recognize that there will not be a one-size fits all process for the reopening of schools, therefore many plans must be available and obtainable for all to be successful.

Inclusive stakeholder engagement is essential for effective decision-making and implementation. Any decision to reopen schools must involve parents, families, students, educators, school employees, public health experts and community members in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the 2020-2021 school year. The presence of the parent and student voice and attention to unique family situations is critical and paramount to the successful reopening of schools. Effective stakeholder engagement must be inclusive, transparent, provide multiple opportunities for input and include meaningful, clear and concise communication. All information and protocols should be disseminated to parents, families, students, and communities, using current best practices for family and student engagement. Furthermore, all communications must be accessible to parents with disabilities and available in multiple languages.

Schools must be prepared to address the transition to back to school, the trauma of a pandemic and the many instructional issues, including the effects of learning loss and the digital divide.

Students will likely return to schools with serious gaps in their learning and retention and with unique social-emotional needs. Schools must be prepared to identify indicators, such as symptoms of trauma, learning loss and/or retention and have the requisite funding and community partnerships to effectively support the student and their family as reopening

occurs. School districts must ensure multiple modes of instruction and scheduling plans are developed in order to remediate and support students, wherever they are on the continuum of learning and instructional needs. Close adherence to local and state academic standards is imperative as we begin the long, arduous and as yet unknown process of reopening our nation's preK-12 schools.

National PTA strongly supports a robust federal investment in response to the COVID-19 pandemic which will include investments in public health, public schools, universities, hospitals, and local and state governments.

National PTA urges the federal and state governments to provide the funding necessary to ensure that when our schools do reopen, they must have the resources needed to do so as safely and successfully as possible. Many of our nation's school districts are already working without the resources needed to provide an equitable education and critical supports to all students. The added strain of recovery from a worldwide pandemic will wreak havoc on all localities and will require significant, immediate and continuing support from federal and state funding.

While our public schools have been woefully under-resourced, this next phase of "returning to school" is an opportunity for all us to work together to visualize and secure what public education should be in a post-pandemic era, and "**Now will be the Time**" to ensure every child can and will reach their fullest potential regardless of zip code.