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Return to School Plans

A Communication Toolkit

A guide for Michigan's Public School Leaders

Helping schools communicate with families, staff, media and the community.

Section II of III

Return to School Communication Toolkit

Section II of III

Section II of the Toolkit for Communicating about Return to School Plans has been developed by the Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA) to support schools in their communication to students, parents, union leaders, staff and board representatives, community members, the media and others about their individual return to school roadmaps (which includes their official COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plans as outlined in [Executive Order 2020-142](#)).

This section is the second of three parts that coincides with the [Opportunity Labs Roadmap](#) and the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Association's General Education Leadership Network's [Continuity of Learning - Back to School Guidance](#) timeframes:

1. **Do First** - Section I of the toolkit was released July 15, 2020. This first part of the toolkit is designed to help schools when communicating with target audiences to highlight work being done over the summer to prepare for various return to school scenarios.
2. **Do Before Schools Open** - This second part of the toolkit is designed to help schools communicate with target audiences to help them understand what school will look like in the fall, describe health and safety procedures, outline educational options and explain closure processes, should they be needed.
3. **When Schools are Open and Operating** - to be released in early August. Section III of the toolkit will provide communication resources to support schools as they share important information and updates relative to school operations as Michigan moves through the phases of the [MI Safe Start Plan](#).

As your district communicates, always consider your school's policies, codes of conduct, local community needs and local climate as you address the information needs of your stakeholders.

Remember: This toolkit is designed to be a communication guide. It highlights some of the ways school districts may choose to communicate about this important issue. Samples contained herein are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.

Note: It is important to recognize that COVID-19 is a public health issue. Please direct questions or inquiries about health guidelines to your local health department.



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This document has been reviewed by representatives from the Michigan Department of Education, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, the Michigan Association of Superintendents and Administrators, and the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators. All sample materials have been used with permission.

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Section II: Do Before Schools Open

What You Can Do Now

- Continue communicating regularly with your key audiences about your Return to School Plans.
- Remember to follow the order of communication described in the RPIE (Research, Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation) Public Relations Process. (See pages 7 and 8 in Section I of this toolkit.)
- Begin with your internal audiences: School staff and school board members. Then move to parents/students/families, media and the community.
- Be consistent and transparent with your internal messages. They will provide the base for your communication with parents/students/families, media and the community.
- Tell all of your audiences which Preparedness Plan the district is using and provide a link to it.
- Consider using the templates/letters in this section as a starting point for the listed areas of communication. While not inclusive of every possible situation, they represent the kind of information, along with the tone and overall approach that can be applied to many of the communication scenarios that will surface over the coming weeks.*
- Modify the templates/letters for your intended audiences (e.g. for internal use consider board, staff, foundation members, PTO/PTA, and unions).
- Remember to use the communication vehicles/platforms you've identified in your planning to reach each of your audiences.
- Work with your local health department throughout this process; it has important protocols, procedures, and boiler-plate information that can inform your communication.
- **Work with your local health department to decide if your district is communicating about ALL potential exposures to COVID-19 or only positive, confirmed COVID-19 cases.**
- In the event of positive, confirmed COVID-19 cases, work with your local health department to communicate about next steps and contact tracing. See your local health department's website or contact your local health department to discover its contact-tracing process. The CDC website has more details about [contract tracing](#), as well as more information on COVID-19, including symptoms and treatment at www.cdc.gov.

*[Note: The language contained in the templates/letters in this section represents sample - NOT recommended - language. District identifiers have been removed. All templates/letters are used with permission. Our thanks to those who shared them.]

Key Points to Communicate

- For the most accurate and timely information pertaining to our schools, visit our website at _____.
- We will share factual information; reporting what we know, when we know it.
- We will comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) to maintain the privacy of any student, teacher or staff member.
- If you think you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, please contact your healthcare provider.
- To see our school's Preparedness Plan visit our website at _____.
- To learn where you can get tested at no charge to you, call the COVID-19 Hotline at 888-535-6136 and press 1, or visit <https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirustest>.

Sample Templates and Letters

Samples included as part of this Toolkit (each sample name is a clickable link):

- **[Learning Models and Changes](#)**
 - [Back to School Letter – District Return to School Plans](#)
 - [Transition from Phase 4 Returning to Phase 3 \(Letter A\)](#)
 - [Transition from Phase 4 Returning to Phase 3 \(Letter B\)](#)
 - [Transition from Phase 3 Returning to Phase 4](#)
 - [Transition from Phase 4 to Phase 5](#)
 - [Transition from Phase 5 Returning to Phase 4](#)
 - [Transition from 5-Day In-Person to Hybrid](#)
 - [Transition Due to Outbreak \(Not Due to Change in Phases\)](#)

- **[COVID-19 Positive Case \(including Athletics and Extra-Curricular Activities\)](#)**
 - [Internal Privacy Reminder to Staff and Others – Positive Case](#)
 - [Parent Notification of COVID-19 Positive Case in a Classroom/Summer Program](#)
 - [Parent Letter – Reopening/Returning to School After a Positive COVID-19 Case](#)
 - [Student Athlete Tests Positive for COVID-19](#)
 - [Positive COVID-19 Case at a School Event and Possible Spread](#)
 - [Student Athlete Tests Positive for COVID-19 \(Hockey\)](#)
 - [Student Athlete Sibling Tests Positive for COVID-19 \(Football\)](#)

- **[Student/Staff Member Death due to COVID-19](#)**
 - [Letter of a Student Death](#)
 - [Staff Announcement of a Student Death](#)
 - [Media Statement – Death of a Student Death](#)
 - [Letter of a Staff Death](#)
 - [Staff Announcement of a Staff Member Death](#)
 - [Media Statement – Death of a Staff Member](#)

- **[Face Coverings and Safety Protocols](#)**
 - [Face Coverings in Phase 4 per Executive Order 2020-142](#)

- **[Addressing Rumors](#)**
 - [How Confirmed Cases will be Communicated](#)

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Learning Models and Changes

Back to School Letter – District Return to School Plans

[School letterhead]

[Insert date]

Dear Parents/Guardians:

This past spring was anything but typical for our school community. The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) forced us to create remote learning plans overnight, deliver instruction in new and unique ways (sometimes without access to technology) and try to maintain a sense of family while being socially distant. On behalf of everyone at [School District], I commend you for coming together during this challenging time. It is clear that when we work together, our students, our staff members and our community thrive.

This summer, Governor Gretchen Whitmer unveiled the [MI Safe Start Plan](#), a guide outlining a phasing structure to support Michiganders as we progress through the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, on June 30, a [MI Safe Schools: 2020-21 Return to School Roadmap](#) was provided to guide educators as they develop their own return to school plans based on each of the phases from the MI Safe Start Plan. With guidance from the [County] Health Department, we are glad to share our plan with you [insert link]. Included in this plan, please find:

- Frequently asked questions
- Learning options (in-person, hybrid, virtual)
- What will happen if remote instruction is required due to illness
- Cleaning protocols
- Health screening
- Transportation expectations
- Information about athletics and extracurricular activities
- And more!

If you are planning on enrolling your child in our district's virtual program [insert name], students must be registered by _____. For questions specifically related to [name of virtual program], please contact [insert name and email address].

It is also important to remember that, although we are currently planning to host in-person instruction this fall, there is still the possibility of needing to close a classroom, school building or the district due to an outbreak of illness. Additionally, there is the possibility increasing number of positive COVID-19 cases may require Governor Whitmer to return our region or the state back to Phase 3 of the MI Safe Start Plan - meaning that school buildings will not be open to students and instruction must occur remotely. As always, we will provide updates to you via [insert messaging system].

Please continue to follow all COVID-19 health and safety recommendations from the [County] Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Cleaning your hands often, either with soap and water for 20 seconds or a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

- Putting distance between yourself and other people (at least 6 feet).
- Covering your mouth and nose with a cloth face covering when around others.
- Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. Clean your hands after throwing away the tissue.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently-touched objects and surfaces daily.

It is our goal to ensure equitable access to education for all our students while continuing to maintain a safe and healthy environment for everyone in our school community. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your student's building principal.

Sincerely,

[Superintendent]

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Transition from Phase 4 Returning to Phase 3 (Letter A)

[School letterhead]

[Insert date]

Dear Parents/Guardians:

As you may have heard in recent news reports, there has been a marked increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in our region. Today, [insert date], due to an increase in the number of positive COVID-19 cases, Governor Whitmer announced that our region has been moved back to Phase 3 of the MI Safe Start Plan. This means that schools must provide remote instruction only. For this reason, on [insert date], students of the [School name] will move to a fully remote learning model and our buildings will close. We must follow the Governor's direction to stop in-person instruction in order to do our part to limit the spread of this disease.

We apologize in advance for the inconvenience and disappointment this causes. The [School name] staff is thankful to our students and parents who have embraced the safety measures that allowed us to maintain in-person learning these past few [days/weeks/months]. Special thanks to our entire staff for supporting our students in their frequent hand washing and for tirelessly cleaning our facility, equipment, and materials.

While we are disappointed that we must close our building, we are pleased with the progress our students have made so far this school year. We are committed to making our remote learning program just as successful. [If using hybrid model: Because our students have already been learning three days of the week remotely, we expect this transition to be a smooth one.]

Our teachers will be reaching out to students and parents to provide further details about our next steps.

As a parent or guardian, we know you are eager to find ways to protect your children and family from COVID-19. Please talk to your children about frequent hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, wearing a face covering in public, and cleaning frequently-touched surfaces at home. Most importantly, keep your children home and stay at home yourself if you are sick.

Thank you for your help in reinforcing good hygiene practices, and for your patience and flexibility. We will await direction from the Governor on when it is safe to reopen school. Until then be sure to ask your child questions about how his/her remote learning is going and be sure to share any concerns with your child's teacher. If you have questions, please call my office at [222-222-2222]. We are all in this together!

Stay safe,

[Superintendent]

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Transition from Phase 4 Returning to Phase 3 (Letter B)

[School letterhead]

[Insert date]

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Today, [insert date], due to an increase in the number of positive COVID-19 cases, Governor Gretchen Whitmer has moved the state of Michigan back to Phase 3 of the [MI Safe Start Plan](#). Phase 3 dictates that in-person learning cannot take place and instead, all schools must transition to remote instruction. Beginning on [insert date], all [insert district name] students will need to begin participating in our remote learning plan. For specific details about the plan, please visit [insert district website]. Teachers and staff members will be in touch with [insert district name] families to ensure that everyone has successfully accessed curriculum materials and to learn if additional support is needed. *For those students who are already enrolled in the district's virtual program, coursework will continue as planned.*

Many traditional school services will still be available while buildings are closed. Families are encouraged to reach out to teachers, office staff or building principals should they need help. Services include (but are not limited to):

- Technology assistance (for both students and parents)
- Food service distribution
- Social-emotional support (e.g. counseling, behavioral support, crisis intervention)
- Tutoring services
- Department of Health and Human Services assistance

Please do not hesitate to contact your school building office if you have any questions. Offices will remain open during the duration of the closure. We will continue to keep you updated as information becomes available.

In the meantime, please continue to follow all COVID-19 health and safety recommendations from the [County] Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Cleaning your hands often, either with soap and water for 20 seconds or a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- Putting distance between yourself and other people (at least 6 feet).
- Covering your mouth and nose with a cloth face covering when around others.
- Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. Clean your hands after throwing away the tissue.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently-touched objects and surfaces daily.

Sincerely,

[Superintendent]

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Transition from Phase 3 Returning to Phase 4

[School letterhead]

[Insert date]

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Today, [insert date], due to improving public health data, Governor Gretchen Whitmer determined that our region has made significant improvements related to the mitigation of COVID-19. Thanks to this good news; [name of district] will begin transitioning students back to in-person instruction beginning on [insert date]. As outlined in our Return to School plan [insert link], our district will be following the safety and health precautions outlined in the [MI Safe Schools: Michigan's 2020-21 Return to School Roadmap](#). The plan includes exhaustive cleaning measures, requires staff members to participate in a health screening prior to reporting to work, and an expectation that if children are sick, they do not come to school. Specific procedures and expectations can be found in our [name of district plan, insert link].

It is important to note that our region's status in the MI Safe Plan is fluid. Should there be an increase of COVID-19 cases in our area; the Governor may require schools to return to full remote instruction. Additionally, should our district or your child's school building or classroom experience an outbreak, we may feel it necessary to close temporarily - a decision that will be made with guidance from the [County] Health Department. Should a closure be deemed necessary, we will communicate updates with you via [insert message system].

As we navigate our return to school, we ask that you remain flexible and understanding. Please continue to follow all COVID-19 health and safety recommendations from the [County] Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Cleaning your hands often, either with soap and water for 20 seconds or a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- Putting distance between yourself and other people (at least 6 feet).
- Covering your mouth and nose with a cloth face covering when around others.
- Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. Clean your hands after throwing away the tissue.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently-touched objects and surfaces daily.

If you have any questions or concerns about procedures, academics, support services or anything else related to the education of your child, please feel free to reach out to your child's building principal.

Sincerely,

[Superintendent]

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Transition from Phase 4 to Phase 5

[School letterhead]

[Insert date]

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Today, [insert date], due to improving public health data, Governor Gretchen Whitmer has moved our Region [Region #] from Phase 4 to Phase 5 of the [MI Safe Start Plan](#). This is good news!

As described in our [insert district's name of return to school plan and link], we have decided to treat Phase 4 and Phase 5 as one phase. This decision was made to ensure that all health and safety protocols continued until the State of Michigan was in Phase 6 - when we return to our traditional in-person education service model prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Until this time, all cleaning practices, screening protocols, cohorting, social distancing and face covering routines will continue. *For students participating in our virtual instruction program, coursework will continue as planned.*

It is also important to remember that, although we are currently planning to host in-person instruction this fall, there is still the possibility of needing to close a classroom, school building or the district due to an outbreak of illness. With this in mind, if your child is sick, do not send them to school. As always, we will provide updates to you via [insert messaging system].

Please continue to follow all COVID-19 health and safety recommendations from the [County] Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Cleaning your hands often, either with soap and water for 20 seconds or a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- Putting distance between yourself and other people (at least 6 feet).
- Covering your mouth and nose with a cloth face covering when around others.
- Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. Clean your hands after throwing away the tissue.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently-touched objects and surfaces daily.

Sincerely,

[Superintendent]

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Transition from Phase 5 Returning to Phase 4

[School letterhead]

[Insert date]

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Today, [insert date], due to an increase in the number of positive COVID-19 cases, Governor Gretchen Whitmer moved our Region [Region #] from Phase 5 back to Phase 4 of the [MI Safe Start Plan](#). While this is a change in designation from the Governor's office, you should not notice a change in our current return to school procedures.

That's because in our [insert district's name of return to school plan and link], we decided to treat Phase 4 and Phase 5 as one phase. This decision was made to ensure that all health and safety protocols continued until the State of Michigan was in Phase 6 - when we return to our traditional in-person education service model prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Until this time, all cleaning practices, screening protocols, cohorting, social distancing and face covering routines will continue. *Note: For students participating in our virtual instruction program, coursework will continue as planned.*

While we are treating Phase 4 and Phase 5 as one phase, it is still worth noting that in accordance with Executive Order 2020-142 the district will follow these policies and procedures for face coverings when the region in which our district is located is in Phase 4 of the Michigan Safe Start Plan:

We will require the wearing of face coverings, except during meals and unless face coverings cannot be medically tolerated, for:

- All staff and all students in grades pre-kindergarten and up when on a school bus.
- All staff and all students in grades pre-kindergarten and up when in indoor hallways and common areas.
- All staff when in classrooms.
- All students in grades 6 and up when in classrooms.
- All students in grades kindergarten through 5 unless students remain with their classes throughout the school day and do not come into close contact with students in another class. [Note: Indoor assemblies that bring together students from more than one classroom are prohibited.]

The district will also incorporate the Return to School Roadmap's required protocols governing hygiene, cleaning, athletics, screening, testing protocols, and busing and student transportation. For complete Preparedness Plan details, visit our website.

It is also important to remember that, although we are currently planning to host in-person instruction this fall, there is still the possibility of needing to close a classroom, school building or the district due to an outbreak of illness. With this in mind, if your child is sick, do not send them to school. As always, we will provide updates to you via [insert messaging system].

Please continue to follow all COVID-19 health and safety recommendations from the [County] Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Cleaning your hands often, either with soap and water for 20 seconds or a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- Putting distance between yourself and other people (at least 6 feet).
- Covering your mouth and nose with a cloth face covering when around others.
- Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. Clean your hands after throwing away the tissue.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently-touched objects and surfaces daily.

Sincerely,

[Superintendent]

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Transition from 5-Day In-Person to Hybrid

[School letterhead]

[Insert date]

Dear Parents/Guardians:

As you may know, there has been a recent increase in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in our area. Under the guidance of public health experts, [School name] has made a decision to adjust the student schedule for [all grades] in order to reduce class sizes, limit the time students spend at school, and to provide more time for disinfecting our facilities. This new way of operating is called a “hybrid model” because it involves both in-person learning and remote learning.

This new model will begin on [date] and means that your child will [attend school a total of two, six-hour days with the remaining learning at home via online learning or paper learning packets]. You will receive more detailed information about your child’s schedule [in the next few days]. While we are disappointed we must trim back our in-person learning, keeping students safe is our top priority. Our teachers planned for this possibility and are fully prepared to support students as they move successfully to this new learning model.

We apologize in advance for the inconvenience this causes our families. The [School name] staff is thankful to our students and parents who embrace the safety measures that allow us to still offer limited in-person learning. Special thanks to our entire staff for continuing to support our students in their frequent hand washing and for tirelessly cleaning our facility, equipment, and materials.

While we are disappointed we must reduce our in-person learning in our buildings, we are pleased with the progress our students have made so far this school year. We are committed to making our hybrid learning program just as successful.

As a parent or guardian, we know you are eager to find ways to protect your children and family from COVID-19. Please talk to your children about frequent hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, wearing a face-covering in public, and cleaning frequently-touched surfaces at home. Most importantly, keep your children home and stay at home yourself if you are sick.

Thank you for your help in reinforcing good hygiene practices, and for your patience and flexibility. We will await direction from public health officials on when it is safe to return to a full-week schedule. Until then, be sure to ask your child questions about how his/her remote learning is going and be sure to share any concerns with your child’s teacher. If you have any questions, please call my office at [222-222-2222]. We are all in this together!

Stay safe,

[Superintendent]

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Transition Due to Outbreak (Not Due to a Change in Phases)

[School letterhead]

[Insert date]

Dear Parents/Guardians:

As you know, there has been a recent increase in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in our area. Beginning tomorrow, [insert date], students of the [School name] will move to a fully remote learning model and our building will close. While we have successfully put a number of safety practices in place, public health officials have advised us that moving to remote learning is the best way to protect our students and staff.

We apologize in advance for the inconvenience and disappointment this causes. The [School name] staff is thankful to our students and parents who have embraced the safety measures that allowed us to maintain in-person learning over the past few [days/weeks/months]. Special thanks to our entire staff for supporting our students in their frequent hand washing and for tirelessly cleaning our facility, equipment, and materials.

While we are disappointed that we must close our building, we are pleased with the progress our students have made so far this school year. We are committed to making our remote learning program just as successful. [If using hybrid model: Because our student have already been learning three days of the week remotely, we expect this transition to be a smooth one.] Our teachers will be reaching out to students and parents to provide further details about our next steps.

As a parent or guardian, we know you are eager to find ways to protect your children and family from COVID-19. Please talk to your children about frequent hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, wearing a face covering in public, and cleaning frequently-touched surfaces at home. Most importantly, keep your children home and stay at home yourself, if you are sick.

Thank you for your help in reinforcing good hygiene practices, and for your patience and flexibility. We will await direction from public health officials on when it is safe to reopen school. Until then be sure to ask your child questions about how his/her remote learning is going and be sure to share any concerns with your child's teacher. If you have questions, please call my office at [222-222-2222]. We are all in this together!

Stay safe,

[Superintendent]

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

COVID-19 Positive Case

Internal Privacy Reminder to Staff and Others – Positive Case

[School letterhead]

[Insert date]

Remember: Please follow HIPPA and FERPA guidelines out of respect for others' rights to privacy as we face this COVID-19 pandemic together.

If a colleague, friend, family member, client, student or anyone else informs you of a COVID-19 diagnosis, please keep it confidential. Our school district is following the local health department's protocol and process to contact those who need to be notified.

Thank you for your cooperation. We are working hard every day to provide factual, transparent, and critical information in a timely manner.

To learn more about local resources, please visit the [County] Health Department's COVID-19 webpage. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact [Responsible Person's Name and Contact Information].

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Parent Notification of COVID-19 Positive Case in a Classroom/Summer Program

[School letterhead]

[Insert date]

Dear Parents/Guardians:

As of Tuesday afternoon, [insert date], a positive case of COVID-19 was reported within Summer Child Care at [Name] Elementary School. Per the CDC recommendation and Phase 4 COVID-19 Task Force on Education Return to School Advisory Council's guidance we will dismiss students and most staff Wednesday, [insert date], through Friday, [insert date].

Per guidance from the CDC, we contacted local health officials upon notification of a positive case. We have been in contact with the head of disease control for the [County] Health Department and are awaiting their plan of action. **At their request, we will be providing names and addresses of all impacted.** This initial short-term dismissal allows time for the local health officials to gain a better understanding of the COVID-19 situation impacting the school, and for custodial staff to deep clean and disinfect the affected facilities. We will continue to work with the local health officials to determine appropriate next steps, including whether an extended dismissal duration is needed to stop or slow further spread of COVID-19.

We understand how hard it is for families to make alternate arrangements on short notice for this Wednesday through Friday, and we appreciate your help in stopping the spread of the disease through this quick action. We will email you additional information by Friday afternoon.

Please know that all staff have been wearing masks while working. We will continue to clean and disinfect light switches, door knobs/push bars, locker handles, toys, bathrooms, copy machines, etc. in addition to our regular cleaning and disinfecting schedule. All families will be notified as soon as we receive additional direction from the health department. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

[Summer Child Care Administrator]

[Contact Information]

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Parent Letter – Reopening/Returning to School After a Positive COVID-19 Case

[School Letterhead]

[Insert date]

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Through collaboration with the local health department, [School name] will open on Monday, [insert date]. Due to our quick response time, we were able to contact individuals to inform them that they needed to self-quarantine. All areas of [Name] Elementary have been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. It is at the direction of the local health department that we are able to return on Monday.

Our program will continue to actively monitor all staff and students while following recommendations from the health department, the CDC, and the MI Safe Schools Plan. We will continue to implement stringent safety protocols for cleaning and hygiene education to staff and students to mitigate risk.

As previously noted, all staff have been wearing masks while working. We will continue to clean and disinfect light switches, doorknobs/push bars, locker handles, toys, bathrooms, copy machines, etc. in addition to our regular cleaning and disinfecting schedule.

Those families that were scheduled to attend Summer Child Care this week Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday will be refunded or credited for future use in the Summer Child Care Program or Kids Club. In the event that we have to close again, we will not complete the refund process until the end of Summer Child Care. If your family was contacted and advised to self-quarantine, you will also be refunded tuition for the time your child/ren was/were not in attendance. You are welcome to contact me with questions.

Safety is our main goal and by working together, we can all do our part!

Sincerely,

[Name of Administrator]

[Contact Information]

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Student Athlete Tests Positive for COVID-19

[School Letterhead]

[Insert date]

Dear [School District] Families,

We just received notice that the preliminary test results of a [Name of] School student athlete whose parent took the student to a health facility to test for COVID-19 has been confirmed as positive by the [County] Health Department.

The district is following up with personal phone calls and letters to ensure all families are properly notified of the situation.

We are working closely with the health department to ensure the well-being of our students, staff, and families. The safety of our community is always our priority.

All [Name] School athletic workouts will be cancelled until further notice so the health department can conduct contact tracing and the exposed facilities can be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. We will notify families when athletic practices can resume.

Our school buildings have remained closed to the public; however, the stadium area and outside restrooms may have been used. These areas will be closed and receive enhanced cleaning following district protocols. Exposed coaches and students are encouraged to get tested for COVID-19 and report results of testing to [Name of contact person and contact information].

Go to the [County] Health Department's website to locate testing near you. Or, you can call the COVID-19 Hotline at 888-535-6136 and press 1, or visit <https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirustest>. Individuals do not need to have symptoms of COVID-19 to be tested.

If families have additional questions or concerns regarding this communication, we ask that they contact their athletic director or principal.

To learn more about the disclosure of student information, see the district's COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan on our district website at _____.

To help mitigate the spread of COVID-19, [School District] supports the state's guidance, along with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations, that instruct all families to wear a face covering in public spaces, stay at least 6 feet from other people, and frequently wash your hands.

Sincerely,

[Superintendent]

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Positive COVID-19 Case at a School Event and Possible Spread

[School letterhead]

[Insert date]

Dear Parents and Community Members:

Today, [insert date], the [School District] was notified by the [County] Health Department that a person in attendance at [name of event] held on [insert date] has tested positive for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Anyone in attendance at [event] is strongly advised to monitor their health. If you are experiencing any symptoms or develop a fever, please contact your primary care physician as soon as possible and be sure to inform them of possible exposure. Those known to have been in direct contact will be notified directly by the [County] Health Department.

COVID-19 is thought to be spread via person-to-person contact through contaminated air droplets from coughing and sneezing by an infected person. As with controlling the spread of other viruses, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urges everyone to take the following preventive measures:

- Stay home when you are sick
- Wash your hands regularly, especially after using the restroom and before preparing or consuming food. Using soap and hot water wash for about 20 seconds.
- Avoid coughing or sneezing into your hands or in the air. Always try to cough or sneeze into a tissue, then throw the tissue away. If you don't have a tissue, cough/sneeze into your arm. Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing and throwing the tissue away.
- As much as you can, avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.
- Maintain at least 6 feet away from those who do not live with you or wear a face covering.

The symptoms of coronavirus are similar to the regular seasonal influenza and include fever, coughing, and shortness of breath. Some people with coronavirus have reported additional symptoms, such as a runny nose, sore throat, nausea, sinus pressure, lethargy, new loss of taste and/or smell, vomiting and diarrhea. In some situations, the disease can develop into pneumonia.

We will continue to monitor this situation in collaboration with the [County] Health Department. Should more information become available, we will issue an update.

Sincerely,

[Superintendent]

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Student Athlete Tests Positive for COVID-19 (Hockey)

[School letterhead]

[Insert date]

Team:

It has come to our attention that a member of the [District Name] Hockey Team has tested positive for COVID-19. The student stayed at home when he felt ill and stopped attending hockey conditioning before he felt ill. The [County] Health Department has been informed and will conduct contact tracing to determine if any team members are at risk. **Please be reminded that all conditioning sessions are voluntary and if you are uncertain about attending, please stay home.**

We have continued to follow the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) guidelines around safety measures during practices. As you are aware, all students are required to answer a series of questions and have their temperature taken before being allowed to practice. Social distancing occurs during practice and masks are worn to practice and when leaving practice. Workout equipment is not shared and all coaches are wearing masks during practice. Our custodians have been cleaning and continue to clean and disinfect the bathrooms [number of times/day and actual times of day of those cleanings]. Hand sanitizer is located on the practice facilities as an added measure as well.

Anyone displaying symptoms of illness should consult a medical professional. Additionally, testing is available through the [County] Health Department. For more information call [phone number] or visit [website]. Or, you can call the COVID-19 Hotline at 888-535-6136 and press 1, or visit <https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirustest>. Individuals do not need to have symptoms of COVID-19 to be tested.

To learn more about COVID-19, visit www.michigan.gov/coronavirus.

Sincerely,
[Person Responsible]

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Student Athlete Sibling Tests Positive for COVID-19 (Football)

[School letterhead]

[Insert date]

Team:

As you are likely aware, a sibling of a [School name] football player has tested positive for COVID-19. Out of an abundance of caution, we immediately canceled practice for the day. Practice will remain canceled until the [County] Health Department provides guidance on the risk this may pose to our student athletes. We will update the team when we have more information to share.

Please be aware that we have continued to follow the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) guidelines around safety measures during practices. As you are aware, all students are required to answer a series of questions and have their temperature taken before being allowed to practice. Social distancing occurs during practice and masks are worn to practice and when leaving practice. Workout equipment is not shared and all coaches are wearing masks during practice. Our custodians have been cleaning and continue to clean and disinfect the bathrooms [number of times/day and actual times of day of those cleanings]. Hand sanitizer is located on the practice facilities as an added measure as well.

Anyone displaying symptoms of illness should consult a medical professional. Additionally, testing is available through the [County] Health Department. For more information call [phone number] or visit [website]. Or, you can call the COVID-19 Hotline at 888-535-6136 and press 1, or visit <https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirustest>. Individuals do not need to have symptoms of COVID-19 to be tested.

To learn more about COVID-19, visit www.michigan.gov/coronavirus.

Sincerely,

[Person Responsible]

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Student/Staff Member Death due to COVID-19

Letter of a Student Death

[School letterhead]

[Insert date]

Dear Parents/Guardians:

It is with great sadness that I report that one of our students has died as a result of complications from the coronavirus. All of us are deeply saddened by the loss of this young person and want you to know that we are here to help you in any way we can.

[IF PARENTS CONSENT <Name of student> was <description of student's personality, achievements, hobbies, etc.>]

Each of us will react to death in our own way, and we need to be respectful of each other's response. Feeling sad is a normal reaction to any loss. Some students may not have known the individual very well and may not be as affected, while others may have been close to the person and experience a great deal of sadness. Some students may find they are having difficulty concentrating on their school work, while others may find that diving into their school work is a good distraction.

During this difficult time, counselors will be available to support students, staff and parents as needed to help them deal with this loss and to help them understand more about the grieving process. [Insert details on how you are going to do this (via Zoom or however it is arranged).]

You are also encouraged to talk with your child(ren) about their thoughts and feelings about [this event/ death]. Provide outlets for expression such as drawing, writing, talking and any other engaging activities. Be honest. When they ask difficult questions, it's okay to say you don't know the answer. Reassure them of their own health and safety and make sure they know that you are emotionally available to them.

If your child(ren) (or you) would like to speak with a counselor, please contact _____.

In addition, here are some other resources that are available to you and your child(ren):

- Crisis Text Line: Text "HOME" to 741-741 to text a live trained counselor
- [Addressing Grief](#): National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)
- [Talking to Children About COVID-19](#): NASP
- [How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus](#): PBS Kids
- [Talking with Children about Coronavirus](#): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- [Grief and Loss](#): CDC

When the time comes, we will follow the family's wishes regarding sharing information about memorial arrangements. If I can be of further assistance to you, or if you have any questions, please call/contact me at [phone number/email].

Sincerely,
[Name]
Principal or Administrator

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Staff Announcement of a Student Death

[Insert date]

It is with great sadness that we report that one of our students has died as a result of complications from the coronavirus. All of us are deeply saddened by the loss of this young person and want you to know that we are here to help you in any way we can.

[IF PARENTS CONSENT <Name of student> was <description of student's personality, achievements, hobbies, etc.>]

During this difficult time, counselors will be available to support students, staff and parents as needed to help them deal with this loss and to help them understand more about the grieving process. [Insert details here on how you are going to do this (via Zoom or however it is arranged).]

When the time comes, we will follow the family's wishes regarding sharing information about memorial arrangements.

If I can be of further assistance to you, or if you have any questions, please call/contact me at [phone number/email].

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Media Statement – Death of a Student

[School letterhead]

[Insert date]

It is with great sadness that we report that one of our students has died as a result of complications from the coronavirus. All of us are deeply saddened by the loss of this young person.

[IF PARENTS CONSENT <Name of student> was <description of student’s personality, achievements, hobbies, etc.>]

During this difficult time, counselors will be available to support students, staff and parents as needed to help them deal with this loss and to help them understand more about the grieving process. [Insert details here on how you are going to do this (via Zoom or however it is arranged).]

When the time comes, we will follow the family’s wishes regarding sharing information about memorial arrangements.

If you have any questions, please call/contact [name] at [phone number/email].

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Letter of a Staff Death

[School letterhead]

[Insert date]

Dear Parents/Guardians:

It is with great sadness that I report that one of our staff members has died as a result of complications from the coronavirus. All of us are deeply saddened by the loss of this dedicated [individual/educator] and want you to know that we are here to help you in any way we can.

[IF FAMILY CONSENTS <Name of employee> was <description of staff member's role, contributions, personality, achievements, etc.>]

Each of us will react to this death in our own way, and we need to be respectful of each other's response. Feeling sad is a normal reaction to any loss. Some students may not have known the individual very well and may not be as affected, while others may have been close to the person and experience a great deal of sadness. Some students may find they are having difficulty concentrating on their school work, while others may find that diving into their school work is a good distraction.

During this difficult time, counselors will be available to support students, staff and parents as needed to help them deal with this loss and to help them understand more about the grieving process. [Insert details here on how you are going to do this (via Zoom or however it is arranged).]

You are also encouraged to talk with your child(ren) about their thoughts and feelings about [this event/ death]. Provide outlets for expression such as drawing, writing, talking and any other engaging activities. Be honest. When they ask difficult questions, it's okay to say you don't know the answer. Reassure them of their own health and safety and make sure they know that you are emotionally available to them.

If your child(ren) (or you) would like to speak with a counselor, please contact _____.

In addition, here are some other resources that are available to you and your child(ren):

- Crisis Text Line: Text "HOME" to 741-741 to text a live trained counselor
- [Addressing Grief](#): National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)
- [Talking to Children About COVID-19](#): NASP
- [How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus](#): PBS Kids
- [Talking with Children about Coronavirus](#): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- [Grief and Loss](#): CDC

When the time comes, we will follow the family's wishes regarding sharing information about memorial arrangements.

If I can be of further assistance to you, or if you have any questions, please call/contact me at [phone number/email].

Sincerely,
[Principal or Administrator]

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Staff Announcement of a Staff Member Death

[Insert date]

It is with great sadness that we report that one of our staff members has died as a result of complications from the coronavirus. All of us are deeply saddened by the loss of this dedicated [individual/educator] and want you to know that we are here to help you in any way we can.

[IF FAMILY CONSENTS <Name of employee> was <description of staff member's role, contributions, personality, achievements, etc.>]

During this difficult time, counselors will be available to support students, staff and parents as needed to help them deal with this loss and to help them understand more about the grieving process. [Insert details here on how you are going to do this (via Zoom or however it is arranged).]

When the time comes, we will follow the family's wishes regarding sharing information about memorial arrangements.

If I can be of further assistance to you, or if you have any questions, please call/contact me at [phone number/email].

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Media Statement – Death of a Staff Member

[School letterhead]

[Insert date]

It is with great sadness that we report that one of our staff members has died as a result of complications from the coronavirus. All of us are deeply saddened by the loss of this dedicated [individual/educator].

[IF FAMILY CONSENTS <Name of employee> was <description of staff member’s role, contributions, personality, achievements, etc.>]

During this difficult time, counselors will be available to support students, staff and parents as needed to help them deal with this loss and to help them understand more about the grieving process. [Insert details here on how you are going to do this (via Zoom or however it is arranged).]

When the time comes, we will follow the family’s wishes regarding sharing information about memorial arrangements.

If you have any questions, please call/contact [name] at [phone number/email].

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Face Coverings and Safety Protocols

Face Coverings in Phase 4 per Executive Order 2020-142

In accordance with Executive Order 2020-142 the district will follow these policies and procedures for face coverings when the region in which our district is located is in Phase 4 of the Michigan Safe Start Plan:

We will require the wearing of face coverings, except during meals and unless face coverings cannot be medically tolerated, for:

- All staff and all students in grades pre-kindergarten and up when on a school bus.
- All staff and all students in grades pre-kindergarten and up when in indoor hallways and common areas.
- All staff when in classrooms.
- All students in grades 6 and up when in classrooms.
- All students in grades kindergarten through 5 unless students remain with their classes throughout the school day and do not come into close contact with students in another class. [Note: Indoor assemblies that bring together students from more than one classroom are prohibited.]

The district will also incorporate the Return to School Roadmap's required protocols governing hygiene, cleaning, athletics, screening, testing protocols, and busing and student transportation. For complete details, please visit our website.

Remember, if your child is sick; do not send them to school. If you, your student or a member of your family has [COVID-19 symptoms](#), please contact your healthcare provider.

Please continue to follow all COVID-19 health and safety recommendations from the [County] Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Cleaning your hands often, either with soap and water for 20 seconds or a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- Putting distance between yourself and other people (at least 6 feet).
- Covering your mouth and nose with a cloth face covering when around others.
- Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. Clean your hands after throwing away the tissue.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently-touched objects and surfaces daily.

(Samples are intended to serve as examples of what could be tailored to individual district situations and needs. School districts are encouraged to follow district policies and procedures and work with their local health departments. When in doubt, consult legal counsel.)

Addressing Rumors

How Confirmed Cases will be Communicated

[School letterhead]

[Insert date]

Dear Parents/Guardians:

In accordance with our administrative guidelines and procedures, the district, in collaboration with [County] Health Department, will only communicate confirmed cases of COVID-19 in a school building, student event/activity, or district-sponsored function. Notification of confirmed cases will be shared via [name of communication tool]. Names of those impacted (whether it is a student, employee, district approved volunteer, or guest/spectator) will not be shared. All contact tracing will be handled confidentially by the [County] Health Department. In an effort to protect student and employee privacy rights, we respectfully encourage all [district] families not to spread rumors or false information. The health and safety of everyone is important and trust that we will work as a community to support each other as we face this pandemic together.

Remember, if your child is sick; do not send them to school. If you, your student or a member of your family has [COVID-19 symptoms](#), please contact your health professional.

Please continue to follow all COVID-19 health and safety recommendations from the [County] Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Cleaning your hands often, either with soap and water for 20 seconds or a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- Putting distance between yourself and other people (at least 6 feet).
- Covering your mouth and nose with a cloth face covering when around others.
- Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. Clean your hands after throwing away the tissue.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently-touched objects and surfaces daily.

Sincerely,

[Superintendent]

Return to School Communication Toolkit

Section I of III: Do First - published July 15, 2020

Section II of III: Do Before Schools Open – published July 23, 2020

Section III of III: Do When Schools are Open and Operating - anticipated to be released in early August

For more information about school communication, please visit www.mspra.org.