

Your Question:

A state legislator asked for information on metrics that districts or states are using to determine if/when it is safe to return to in-person instruction.

Our Response:

The following state examples were pulled from a review of state school reopening guidance.

State Examples:

- **Arizona:** In [conjunction with](#) state Superintendent Hoffman, Gov. Ducey [directed](#) (see “Arizona: Open for Learning) public health officials to identify metrics to guide school district reopening decisions. The department of health services released [school reopening guidance](#) on Aug. 6.
- **California:** Gov. Newsom has laid out his [school reopening plan](#), which includes the strict enforcement of the department of public health’s six metrics for safe school reopening — data that includes the number of new infections per 100,000 residents, the test positivity rate and the change in hospitalization rate, among others. If a county does not meet these thresholds, they will be placed on the [county monitoring list](#) and be unable to open for in-person instruction until they are off the list for 14 days.
- **Iowa:** The state legislature enacted [legislation](#) requiring the majority of core classes to be taught in person. Gov. Reynolds supported this legislation through a [proclamation](#) that encouraged in-person learning and allowed for remote learning in limited cases. The proclamation requires schools to receive approval for temporary remote learning from the department of education and the department of public health. This [FAQ document](#) from the department of education provides additional information on the legislation and proclamation. [Guidance](#) from the department of education indicates that remote learning will be allowed if the positivity rate in the county is over 15%.
- **Minnesota:** Gov. Walz issued an [executive order](#) requiring schools to utilize public health data in making reopening decisions. The public health data thresholds for reopening are laid out in the state’s [safe learning plan](#) (see pages 5-6).
- **New York:** New York State Education Department [reopening guidance](#) requires schools to consider their ability to maintain appropriate social distance, PPE and cloth face mask availability, and availability of safe transportation and local hospital capacity when determining whether it is safe to return to in-person instruction. Gov. Cuomo [declared](#) that schools in regions with an infection rate below 5% for at least 14 days may return to in-person instruction. New York City Mayor De Blasio [set a 3% threshold](#) for the city’s schools.
- **Oregon:** The state department of education [identified](#) three sets of metrics to guide reopening decisions:
 - The first set of metrics represents the level of disease circulation that would be required for return to in-person instruction, with limited exceptions. Schools would need to begin transition planning as case rates and test positivity declines in counties in order to prepare the school community for the potential upcoming change.
 - The second set of metrics refers to indicators of increased COVID-19 spread in the community that would indicate the need to plan for transition back to comprehensive distance learning.
 - The third set of metrics indicates disease spread in the community that would prompt initiation of Comprehensive Distance Learning with limited exceptions.

- **Tennessee:** The department of health released a [decision protocol](#) to support districts in making determinations in the event of in-school spread. The protocol includes factors such as levels of community spread.
- **Washington:** According to [reopening guidance](#), schools are required to receive approval from their local health authority if they are in phase 1 or 1.5 of the [county reopening protocol](#). To support districts in making reopening determinations, the department of health released a [report](#) highlighting the dangers of reopening schools without public health data that supports the decision.