GRAND ISLE SUPERVISORY UNION

CURIOUS | CREATIVE | COURAGEOUS | CAPABLE

Strong & Healthy Level 3 School Reopening Plan

Effective November 16, 2020

Level 1: Dismissal
Level 2: Reopen Schools with Enhanced Distancing Restrictions
Level 3: Reopen Schools with Distancing Restrictions

Vermont schools reopened on September 8th at Level 2. As of September 26, 2020, schools moved to Level 3. Implementation of this framework, based on the [Vermont Strong and Healthy Start School Reopening Guidelines](#) and other published guidance from the Agency of Education and Department of Health, is structured to focus on safety while allowing students equitable access to learning opportunities. Updates to the Guidance were made on October 23, 2020 and became effective on November 16, 2020.

All GISU schools will develop and implement a building-level plan to adhere to the components articulated in this framework.

All GISU schools will develop and implement a community outreach plan to maintain active two-way communication between individual schools and school families.

Please note: The COVID-19 situation continues to evolve very rapidly – so the information we are providing in this guidance may change. It is expected that there will be edits and updates to this guidance as new information becomes available.

On July 15, 2020 the Agency of Education released guidance to aid all supervisory unions & school districts to establish a safe & healthy reopening plan in response to the COVID 19 pandemic. This prompted the Grand Isle Supervisory Union Leadership team to work collaboratively with faculty and staff to create a reopening plan guided by the following principles:

- Must be SAFE
- Collaborative
- Follow VT AOE and VT Department of Health Guidance
    - Flexible and responsive to guidance as it evolves
- Translates between in person and remote instruction
- Follows the same parameters as the Continuity of Learning Plan (Safe/Ethical/Equitable)
    - Student-friendly/ Learner-centered
        - Support emotional health & social-emotional learning
        - Developmentally appropriate for students
    - Educationally viable/feasible
        - Supportive of teachers and their social-emotional health
        - Teacher health & safety
    - Fair and equitable for students on IEPs & 504 plans
        - Accommodations & modifications appropriately for students as needed
        - Be mindful of student health needs as well.
        - Ensuring access and equity for all students.
        - Keeping students safe and healthy
- Communication (Two way)

The leadership team would like to thank faculty and staff members that gave up time during their summer break to help create this plan. We would also like to express our appreciation to the community and family members that provided feedback during the community meetings and through their participation in surveys.

The COVID Coordinator for the Grand Isle Supervisory Union is District Nurse, Emily Dousevicz.

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The information contained within is based off of the most recent guidance we have received from the Agency of Education and Department of Health. As we receive more guidance and have more conversations with our faculty and communities, we will release more specific information.

Learning Options:

GISU recognizes that one size fits all will not work for reopening schools. We worked with faculty and staff to figure out the best way to reopen that is both educationally beneficial and safe. Therefore, families will have two choices for educating their children with GISU: a hybrid, or mix, of in-person and remote learning or fully remote learning. Each school will send out a survey to their families and you will make the choice for your child(ren) for the first trimester. Barring a dismissal where we will all have to shift to remote instruction, this will be the model of instruction for your child(ren). Attendance is required each day and is determined by attendance in person, work submitted on remote days, and attendance at synchronous remote learning.

As we move into this school year, it is important that we note that the experience of remote learning in the spring and the experience of remote learning in the fall will feel and be very different. Our teachers learned a tremendous amount about what works and does not work in remote learning and we are spending a significant amount of time thinking and rethinking how we deliver the best education possible for our students regardless of the model of schooling they attend. When we think of the Spring, what we did was emergency or crisis education, now we have had time and opportunity to strategically think and plan for what education will look like moving into the new school year. We will continue to update you on the specifics of what you can expect from the SU, schools and teachers as we finalize details.

When in Level 2, there are the following options:
Option 1: Hybrid Learning
In our hybrid learning model, students will attend two days of in-person instruction and three days of remote instruction. These days will be consistent each week (see below for example). Each child will be assigned a cohort (group) and attend in-person instruction with that cohort each week. In most schools, cohorts will have no more than ten students per classroom and in many cases it will be fewer than that. Every attempt will be made to ensure that siblings attend on the same day.

- Quick facts about hybrid learning:
  - Students learn both in-person and remotely
  - Students alternate between in-person and remote learning based upon their designated cohort (group of kids).
  - The GISU will be using an A/B cohort model that isolates two distinct groups of students who attend school in-person on different days of the week. All students will learn remotely on Wednesday to provide an opportunity to deep clean the

school buildings, for teachers to plan, attend professional learning, and work with students.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Cohort A	In-Person	Remote	Remote	In-Person	Remote
Cohort B	Remote	In-Person	Remote	Remote	In-Person

- o GISU will provide devices to access remote instruction for families who do not have a device or a device that is conducive to remote learning
- o Students will be given supplies as needed to complete assignments at home.
- o Students will be supported by GISU Faculty and Staff on remote days as well as in-person days
- o Remote learning days will consist of learning experiences that can be completed independently, whereas in-person days will focus on learning activities that are more complex and dependent on teacher direction and facilitation.
- o Parents can expect at least weekly views of the learning expectations and experiences students will have. This could look like a 'menu' or a newsletter with an overview of the week.
- o If a family needs to or wants to switch to the remote model they may do so using the following **process.** The school may also determine that a switch needs to be made and will follow this **process.**

*** Students in need of more individualized support may have access to additional in-person learning. The GISU will use a protocol to identify student needs according to our local assessments and assessment of students most at-risk in a remote learning environment.**

Option 2: Full-time remote learning.

In our remote learning model, students will participate in five full days of remote instruction. Like the hybrid model, students learning in a full-time remote setting will still be assigned to an "A" cohort or a "B" cohort. These days will be consistent each week (see below for example). On these days, students will have a schedule of synchronous or "live" learning with their teacher and their peers through Google Meets. The other days, students will work through their other assignments and learning independently.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Cohort A	Synchronous Learning and Remote Learning	Independent Remote Learning	Independent Remote Learning	Synchronous Learning and Remote Learning	Independent Remote Learning
Cohort B	Independent	Synchronous	Independent	Independent	Synchronous

	Remote Learning	Learning and Remote Learning	Remote Learning	Remote Learning	Learning and Remote Learning

- Quick facts about Full Time Remote Learning:
    - o Learning takes place completely remotely and students will be assigned to a cohort
    - o Learning is a mixture of scheduled synchronous (live) online meetings and asynchronous (work at your own pace) work
    - o Attendance is required each day and will be determined by work submitted and attendance at all synchronous meetings in their schedule.
    - o Students will work with a designated teacher or group of teachers and submit all assignments online through Class Dojo or Google Classroom, even assignments that are not computer based (by taking pictures, recording a video, etc).
    - o GISU will provide devices to access remote instruction for families who do not have a device or a device that is conducive to remote learning
    - o Students will be given supplies as needed to complete assignments at home.
    - o Students may also sign up for meals as needed.
    - o Students may not participate in extracurricular activities or any in-person activities, but may participate in extracurricular activities that can be delivered remotely.
    - o If a family needs to or wants to switch to the Hybrid model they may do so using the GISU process. The school may also determine that a switch needs to be made and will follow this process.
    - o In order to engage in this model students will need access to high-speed reliable internet and abide by the Remote Learning Expectations.

In Level 3, GISU schools will work to bring students back to increased in-person learning while accounting for adherence to guidance and the capacity of space and staffing levels.

*** Students in need of more individualized support may have access to additional synchronous ("live") learning. The GISU will use a protocol to identify student needs according to our local assessments and assessment of students most at-risk in a remote learning environment.***

Other possible scenarios, not offered at this time and dependent on Health and Safety Guidance:

- **Possibility 1**: Full time remote instruction for all students
    - o This will occur when:

- There is an outbreak of the virus in a school or community and being in-person will lead to the potential for community spread and infection
- The VT Agency of Education and VT Department of Health Require all schools to transition to remote instruction due to viral spread.
    - o The A/B rotation will remain consistent with synchronous learning occurring on what was formerly a student's in-person or synchronous day.
    - o All students will have to abide by the Remote Learning Expectations.

- **Possibility 2**: Full time in-person for all students
    - o This will only occur if:
        - VT Agency of Education and VT Department of Health guidance changes to allow for all students and faculty to safely be in the building at the same time.
    - o In-Person Learning will adhere to any new safety requirements.
    - o All students return in person to school settings that are appropriately modified to accommodate the health and safety requirements outlined in the "GISU Return Plan." Examples of modifications could include altered classroom configurations, setting up additional learning spaces, and schedule changes.

- **Possibility 3:** Full-time in-person for students PK-6
    - o Dependent upon health and safety guidance from VT Agency of Education and VT Department of Health, enrollment, staff and building capacity.
    - o In-Person Learning will adhere to any new safety requirements.
    - o All students return in person to school settings that are appropriately modified to accommodate the health and safety requirements outlined in the "GISU Return Plan." Examples of modifications could include altered classroom configurations, setting up additional learning spaces, and schedule changes.

Home School or Home Study

We are confident that the options presented in this document will give families a viable option for their child(ren)'s educational needs this school year. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact your administrator.

Should the options not work for your family and you are interested in Homeschooling/Home Study. This option is separate from our Supervisory Union and is not supported by our teachers and resources. Please use the link below and contact the Agency of Education for any questions or assistance as Home Study is not a function of the schools or Supervisory Union.

Here are some quick facts:
- Home Study requires an application through the Agency of Education
    - https://education.vermont.gov/vermont-schools/school-operations/home-study
- Per the AOE Memo about Home Study from February 8, 2019: "Students enrolled full time in home study programs are not entitled to special education services at the public schools. Public schools, through consultation with parents, may, but are not required to,

provide special education supports and services to full time homeschoolers through a "Services Plan." A services plan may include professional consultation, special education and/or related services."

  ○ More information on Special Education services can be found on page 158 -166 of the [Vermont State Special Education Rules](#)

● Families must determine their own curriculum and academic resources
● Due to Safety and Health Guidance, students will not have the ability to join Unified Arts or Extracurriculars in person, but can join remotely.

GISU REMOTE LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

All students within GISU will be remote learning whether 3 days a week in our hybrid model or 5 days a week in our fully remote model. Additionally, depending on health and safety guidance, all instruction may transition to fully remote for all students. The following are expectations for all within our learning community to ensure a successful 2020-2021 school year. **All families are expected to sign and return a copy of these expectations to the front office by the second week of school.**

1. Supervisory Union
    ● Inform students, parents, teachers and staff regarding updates in guidance, plans and other infor
    ● Communicate clear and consistent expectations for all teachers, parents and students.
    ● Provide the necessary supports and resources to ensure high quality, equitable learning for all.
    ● Communication from the SU will primarily occur through the GISU website and Facebook page as well as school-based email distribution lists, websites, and facebook pages.

2. Building Based Administrators
    ● Ensure clear and timely communication of expectations and decisions.
    ● Provide the necessary support and resources to ensure the social-emotional supports for all students, staff, and families.
    ● Differentiate support for educators, students, and families.
    ● Communication from school will primarily occur through the school based website and Facebook pages as well as email distribution lists.

3. Teachers and Staff
    ● Develop learning experiences that maximize the dual modalities of in person (hybrid learners) and remote learning days (all learners) and that are age/grade appropriate.
    ● Provide a clear overview of weekly assignments and due dates.

- Provide and follow a schedule for synchronous learning opportunities..
- Teachers are expected to check in with students and or parents regularly through phone calls, Google Meets, Class Dojo, Google Classroom, email or other authorized modes of communication to ensure student participation and engagement.
- Teachers will respond within 24 hours of a parent or student inquiry/communication
- Provide timely feedback on student work.

3. Students
- Review lessons and learning activities assigned by the teacher.
- Participate in video/real time lessons.
- Complete assigned work/learning activities to the best of their ability and by the due dates indicated.
- Complete assignments by due dates, attend and actively participate in synchronous learning activities.
- Actively reach out to teachers when help is needed.
- (Hybrid only) Ensure that materials and supplies move back and forth between in-person and remote days and are kept in good condition.
- (Hybrid only) Bring two, clean masks to school each day and wear them as directed.

4. Families and Caregivers
- Review the Remote Learning Expectations.
- Establish a daily routine and provide an appropriate space to support student learning.
- Review assigned work, discuss expectations with your child and communicate with teachers.
- Actively reach out to teachers via the school's approved communication channels and during their assigned office hours when help is needed.
- Ensure students complete and turn in assigned work each day as well as attend scheduled synchronous learning.
- Support students with caring for supplies and materials.
- (Hybrid only) Ensure that students have at least two, clean masks and clearly labeled water bottle with them each day.

Name(s) of child(ren) and grades:

By signing below, I acknowledge that I read and understand the expectations for my child and family when remote learning. I understand that should my family struggle to meet these expectations the building administrator will be in contact to create a plan to ensure my child's success.

Name:_____ Date:_____

Signature:_____ [1]

Student Support & Special Education

While the extended school closures have a significant impact on the education of Vermont students statewide, students with disabilities may experience increased distress and negative educational consequences due to the changes in instructional method and environment. There is a continuum of teaching and learning connected by the individualized Distance Learning Plans (IEP as written, amended IEP, or revised IEP) for students with disabilities as we prepare for, and implement recovery efforts.

The provision of special education and related services operates within the general education curriculum and instruction, which continues to be a driver. During dismissal in the spring, educational agencies experienced difficulty fully implementing some students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). It is essential to remember that a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) continues to be the touchstone for the IEP process, including special education eligibility and services during the extended school closures through the return to school and ultimate recovery period. Now and during the back to school for the 2020-21 school year, it is essential to provide FAPE and early intervention and special education services (IDEA) to the greatest extent possible.

Due to the health and safety requirements that will be in place when school resumes, special education services may be provided differently during the upcoming school year as compared to previous years. As stated in the U.S. Department of Education's March 21 Supplemental Fact

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[1] Resources Consulted in creating Learning & Instruction Section:

- https://www.edelements.com/hubfs/Digital%20Virtual%20Learning%20and%20Working/Virtual%20Classroom%20for%20Teachers.pdf?hsCtaTracking=d656d0ca-9dd1-43bb-9e9b-6ef4a98cefcd%7Cd2a0d528-47f7-4f1f-ba11-aa12f1f7656c
- https://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/656267/28279534/1585786247240/Remote+Learning+Plan.pdf?token=OEMrCA4uwtJvKm2zc96taR8i2lM%3D
- http://wilmette39.ss9.sharpschool.com/for_students/remote_learning/remote_learning_expectations
- Student Rubrics

sheet, "School districts must provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those individuals providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to these students." While guidance continues to be forthcoming, the information listed below is based on current guidance for the new school year. It will be updated and revised as additional information is received.

Promoting Inclusive Services and the Least Restrictive Environment

When determining classroom setups to accommodate physical distancing requirements, individual schools will factor in the additional special educators and related service providers who will need to enter the classroom to provide services for students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

Considerations for Preschool-Age Students

Preschool-age students with disabilities are particularly in need of in-person services to develop the socialization, motor, and communication skills that are vitally important at this age. Schools will prioritize in-person instruction for this age group but should also be prepared to adjust to remote services if necessary.

Delivery of IEP Services

Students must receive all services according to their IEPs through in-person or remote instruction, emphasizing providing in-person education to this particularly vulnerable population of students whenever possible. It is recommended that additional provisions are made to provide as much in-person instruction as possible for students with moderate to severe disabilities (e.g., maintaining full-time in-person education for students in substantially separate classrooms even if the rest of the school is in a hybrid model of instruction).   GISU has instituted the following to determine individual student's need for additional in-person services.

Student Scheduling Considerations

A high priority should be given to provide in-person instruction for students who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), 504 Plans, EST plans, and English-language learners, building an equitable schedule for Blended Remote Learning Days. These students should be in attendance in-person daily during Blended Remote Learning Days. Also, schools will consider prioritizing in-person instruction for students under the age of 10 and those who have had greater difficulty learning remotely, as evidenced by the progress monitoring and attendance rates from spring 2020.

IEP teams should consider appropriate in-person instruction for special education students. The U.S. Department of Education's guidance states, "Where, due to the global emergency and resulting closures of schools, there has been an inevitable delay in providing services – or even making decisions about how to provide services - Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams must make an individualized determination whether and to what extent compensatory services may be needed when schools resume normal operations."Before the first day of instruction, when feasible, schools should conduct a reintegration meeting with school staff,

parents/guardians/caregivers, and students to address any specific health concerns or learning needs or gaps identified during remote learning, before the first day of instruction whenever feasible. In addition, students with 504 Plans, EST plans and English-language learners,may also have a school-based team consider individualized transition plans to support the transition to in-person learning.

Schools and districts should review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's list of those who are at higher risk of severe illness if they are exposed to the coronavirus. The administration will work closely with the GISU school nurse, the COVID-19 coordinator, and the student's medical provider, to determine safe alternatives to in-person instruction. Schools and districts will consider continuing remote instruction for medically fragile students, students at a higher risk of severe illness, and students who live with individuals at higher risk of severe illness. Considerations should include:

- Whether the student's medical condition is conducive to in-person attendance or if needs would best be met remotely.
- The student's behavior and capacities, including to control secretions, cover mouth/nose when sneezing and coughing, ability to maintain distance from other classmates, ability to tolerate wearing a face covering (may consider the option of face shield instead), ability to wash hands with/without assistance, and ability/safety of use of hand sanitizer.
- The number of students per classroom and the ability to maintain 6-foot distance when possible.
- Consulting with individual student health care providers, if applicable, and IEP teams to determine the best modality to meet students' needs on an individualized basis. Appropriate consents must be obtained for communication with outside providers. Review IEPs, 504 Plans, asthma action plans, or Individualized Health Plans to determine if these plans will need to be amended.

Schools should also consider prioritizing in-person instruction for subjects that students are less able to engage independently from home, such as classes that require a hands-on component.

Monitoring Student Progress

Schools and districts will continue to issue Progress Reports at least as often as report cards or progress reports are provided for students without disabilities. Educators and service providers must collect data, whether in-person or remotely, and use this data to monitor each student's progress and develop Progress Reports.

Communication with Families

Parents of students with disabilities have always had a decision-making voice through participation at the IEP Team. Remote learning has increased parent capacity (with ongoing coaching and support by educators) to provide supplemental instruction and progress monitoring. Leveraging this skill and elevating the supportive role of the family to accelerate student progress is essential.

Educators and service providers must communicate with parents and guardians to discuss the provision of IEP services during this challenging time. Ongoing communication will help educators, related service providers, and parents/guardians develop a comprehensive plan for students to receive high-quality, individualized instruction, and related services.

It is imperative that communication with students and families becomes even more consistent and frequent as they transition to in-person instruction and/or Blended Remote Learning Days occurs.

The return to in-person instruction will involve new health and safety protocols and potentially new schedules. That means that all schools and districts should "over-communicate" with parents about what the return to school will look like. The GISU will communicate with families about how they can reinforce and help explain safety protocols at home. Provide families with ample opportunities to ask questions.

Social/Emotional Well-Being

In returning to school, now more than ever, it is evident that schools play a critical role in the overall whole-child development process and quality of life for families. Research makes it clear that, compared to adults, children are more vulnerable to the emotional impact of traumatic events that disrupt their daily lives. Considerations for students with special needs, who have a history of trauma, are broad and overarching.

Initial Evaluations, Reevaluations, and IEP Team Meetings

The processes for annual review Team meetings, initial evaluations, reevaluations, and transition to early childhood special education described below are focused on equitable access guided by the following principles: 1) student-centeredness; 2) communication and transparency; 3) parent engagement; and 4) documentation.

Key Considerations Applicable to Annual Review Team Meetings, Initial Evaluations, Reevaluations and Transition to Early Childhood Special Education

There are several critical considerations for annual review Team meetings, initial evaluations, reevaluations, and transition to early childhood special education; these considerations are focused on the individual needs of the student and require clear communication with the parent.

- The District must not communicate or implement any blanket policies that preclude IEP Team meetings or evaluations from occurring or altering the IEP Team process described in federal and state statutes and regulations.
- The District cannot require a parent to waive procedural rights when agreeing to an extension of timelines or a virtual meeting.
- If the District is seeking an extension of evaluation or IEP Team meeting timelines, the District should communicate the reasons for proposing an extension and engage in collaborative decision-making with the parent about how to proceed, before sending documentation.

- In documenting parental agreement to an extension, a Form 8 – Written Agreement Between Parents and District – Re-evaluations Notice of Proposed School District Action or another form of written confirmation of the agreement, such as an email, are allowable types of documentation. The District should record discussions with the parent, outlining the reason(s) for the extension with the anticipated date on which the meeting or evaluation may occur.2
- In communications with the parent, the District must use language that is understandable to the public.
- The District should use multiple modes of communication, such as written notice, email, and telephone calls.
- The District should assist parents in resolving technology-related barriers.

Annual Review Team Meetings

Under the IDEA regulation at 34 CFR § 300.324(b)(1)(i) & (ii), Districts are required to review the IEPs and the progress of each eligible student at least annually.   The District recognizes the difficulties the IEP Team may encounter in convening the IEP Team for an annual review, and the challenges parents may face in participating remotely. As a result, a parent may ask to postpone the annual review Team meeting until the meeting can be held in-person. In all cases where the Team is unable to convene, the stay-put IEP remains in effect.

The District must hold the annual review IEP Team meeting within the required timeline; the District should contact the parent to ensure the parent agrees to participate in an IEP Team meeting virtually or telephonically. If the parent agrees to participate, the District should issue the IEP Team Meeting Notice by mail, email, or other electronic means (i.e., the parent's preferred method of communication) and conduct the annual review IEP Team meeting remotely.

If the District has made multiple attempts to communicate with the parent using a variety of methods, such as phone, mail or email, and the parent has not responded to the outreach, the District should document all attempts to communicate with the parent, reasons for the proposed extension and the anticipated date when the meeting is likely to occur. To help ensure that parents can access communication from the District, it is essential to ensure the language is understandable to the public.

If the District has made multiple and extensive attempts to communicate with the parent using a variety of methods, such as phone, mail or email, and the parent has not responded to the outreach, IDEA regulations at 34 CFR § 300.322(d) contemplate that the District may conduct the meeting without the parent if the District documents the records of the telephone calls made or attempted and the results of those calls, retains documentation of the correspondence sent to the parents and any response received as well as detailed records of attempted visits made to the parent's home or place of employment and the results of those visits.

If the District is unable to conduct the annual review IEP Team meeting within the required timeline, but the parent has not agreed to an extended timeline following discussion with the District, the District should document the communication with the parent, including the parent's stated reason(s) for disagreeing with the request to extend timelines, as well as the specific reasons that the District is unable to hold the annual review IEP Team meeting within the

required timeframe. The District should issue Parent's Notice of Procedural Safeguards. The full range of dispute resolution mechanisms, including mediation, is available to parents and districts.

Conducting Assessments

When a referral for an evaluation is received, the District must send written notice by mail or email to the parent within fifteen days of receipt. The District may need to prioritize evaluations; questions to ask in prioritizing evaluations include:

- Was the evaluation started prior to school closure?
- Was the signed consent received prior to closure?
- Is the student transitioning between schools, programs, etc.?
- When in the best interest of the student, it is recommended that Districts conduct assessments remotely. If assessments require in-person observation or face-to-face administration, assessments may need to be delayed until they can be done in-person. Not all assessments may be conducted virtually, as a remote evaluation may invalidate results.

To allow the parent/guardian to participate fully in the IEP Team meeting, the District must provide summaries of assessments by mail or email to ensure receipt at least two days prior to the IEP Team meeting.

Initial Evaluations and Reevaluations

An initial evaluation must be conducted within 60 days of receiving parental consent under IDEA, or within the state-established timeline within which the evaluation must be conducted. 34 C.F.R. § 300.301(c). Once the evaluation is completed, IDEA does not contain an explicit timeline for making the eligibility determination, but does require that the IEP be developed in accordance with 34 C.F.R. §§ 300.320-300.324 (34 C.F.R. § 300.306(c)(2)).

A reevaluation of each child with a disability must be conducted at least every three years, unless the parents and the public agency agree that a reevaluation is unnecessary 34 C.F.R. § 300.303(b)(2). However, when appropriate, any reevaluation may be conducted through a review of existing evaluation data, and this review may occur without a meeting and without obtaining parental consent, unless it is determined that additional assessments are needed. 34 C.F.R. §300.305(a).

Delay of Initial Evaluations due to COVID-19

Complicating factors stemming from COVID-19 is an acceptable reason for an initial evaluation delay. However, "COVID-19" is not an acceptable reason without also detailing the specifics of the situation – it must be an individualized determination. LEAs must complete the evaluation delay form stating the specific reason for not being able to complete the evaluation. Examples: social distancing required by staff health, student availability, the vulnerability of a family member, or school closure. SBE Rule 2362.2.1(c)(2) discusses using a review of existing data as the sole basis for the initial evaluation and if this data exists, a record review could be used to make an eligibility determination. In addition, SBE Rule 2362.2.1(d) states if the completion of the initial evaluation will be delayed for a period exceeding 60 days, the parent shall be given

written notice of the delay and a schedule of evaluation activities. Such notice shall be sent to a parent before the expiration of the 60-day period.

When the District can conduct relevant assessments remotely, they need to communicate with the parent to discuss the remote assessment process and determine whether the parent still seeks to move forward with the evaluation. A parent may opt to postpone the evaluation until it can be conducted in person.   Parental consent for evaluations may be provided through the mail, email, text message, other means of electronic communication, or phone call/voicemail. If the parent provides consent orally, the District must create a detailed record of the conversation or message (i.e., date, time, mode of communication).

Additional Considerations for Reevaluations

Assessment information must contribute to educational programming; students should not undergo testing that is duplicative or unnecessary.

Parents may agree to waive some or all the assessments and rely on data that already exists to inform the reevaluation process. These data may include a review of student records, most recent assessments, or a recent independent educational evaluation.

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

Currently, there are unique problems for Districts in determining eligibility for children who are potentially eligible for ECSE. Children can be referred for ECSE services through 1) referrals from child find activities, and 2) referrals from Early Intervention (EI).

Referrals from Child Find Activities

Districts are responsible for engaging in child find activities for all students, including young children while following current COVID-19 public health guidelines. As children are identified as being potentially eligible for ECSE, the initial evaluation guidance described above applies for young children who are referred for special education evaluation.

Referrals from Early Intervention (EI)

For children transitioning out of EI, transition planning occurs as part of a child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). The transition plan outlines the steps to be taken and services necessary to support the child when the child turns three and exits EI. EI program staff, with approval of the parent, convene a Transition Planning Meeting (TPM) that includes the parent and a representative of the child's school district of residence, at least 90 days and — at the discretion of the parties — up to nine months before the child's third birthday. The purpose of the TPM is to review the child's EI services and development, discuss options and services once the child leaves EI, and establish or review transition activities.

For some young children referred by EI to Districts for evaluation, existing evaluation documentation, assessments, or other diagnostic information, as well as the IFSP, may clearly establish the child's eligibility for early childhood special education. During this period of a public health emergency, it is recommended that the IEP Team review existing evaluations to determine eligibility.

The District should collaborate with local EI programs to support the child's transition from EI. With agreement by the parent, EI programs may complete additional assessments that may facilitate the process for determining eligibility.

Students on IEPs, 504s, EST plans and other students may qualify for additional in-person supports depending on capacity and the current healthy guidelines. A higher investment of in-person-time now will allow the student to be more productive later, if we have to go to 100% remote learning again. The following charts and visuals are meant to help teams determine and assign students to additional in-person and remote supports as well as determine the frequency, duration, and group size.

General Prioritization Matrix

- Student attended remote learning sessions and completed work meeting expectations	- Attend hybrid schedule with assistance on remote days as requested by parent/student
Prior to dismissal student was on target and completed work as expected: - Student attended remote learning sessions and completed work but was inconsistent with accuracy **AND/OR** - Student did not attend remote learning sessions and completed work but not in a timely manner	- Attend hybrid schedule with assistance on remote days from school staff or teacher to ensure understanding
- Student did not attend remote learning sessions and did not complete work as expected- prior to dismissal student was completed work with assistance in a timely manner **AND/OR** - Prior to dismissal student was one grade level below target or missing basic foundational skills **AND/OR** - Prior to dismissal student was on an intervention schedule and continued to maintain or make progress during dismissal period	- Attend hybrid schedule with assistance on remote days from school staff or teacher to ensure understanding and promote completion - In person C day call back discussion - Discussion for AB grouping
- Student did not attend remote learning sessions and did not complete work as expected- prior to	- AB schedule discussion - C day discussion

Safety Protocols, Procedures and Behaviors During the School Day

Physical distancing in order to reduce the frequency of close contact between individuals is still the single most effective way to slow the spread of the coronavirus. A schoolwide distancing plan and schedule supports distancing guidelines; minimizes adults and students mixing among grade levels/pods; eliminates shared rooms as feasible; reduces travel around the building; and minimally addresses the following areas:

Arrival, departure and hallway movement
- Avoid congregating/mixing at entry/exit points and in hallways
- Students will immediately report to class after entry screening
- Hallway/locker/cubby procedures will be in place to reduce congregating at both arrival and dismissal
- Pre-screened bus riders and walk-ins will use separate entrances (signage)
- Students will maintain distancing expectations while in line and traveling in hallways (consider tape marks for lining up)

Classroom/Group distancing and configurations
- Students must be kept in groups, not to exceed the maximum number allowed by state guidance, including teachers and staff.
- Whenever feasible, keep classes together to include the same group of students each day, and keep the same teachers and staff with the same group each day. This will need to be addressed differently to meet the education needs of high school (and maybe middle school) students.
- Restrict mixing of groups (including hallways, bathrooms, etc.)
- Space seating/desks and bedding (head-to-toe positioning) to at least 3 or 6 feet apart based on grade level guidance from the VT AOE (front/back/sides).
- Turn desks/tables to face in the same direction (rather than facing each other), or have students sit on only one side of tables, spaced apart.
- Communal spaces and shared classrooms such as gymnasiums and cafeterias should be closed for their intended use; these spaces, however, may be used as an extension of the classroom to allow for physical distancing.
- Group activities with the potential to generate increased respiratory droplets and aerosols should be avoided. This includes activities such as singing (e.g. choir, musical theater, etc.) and music that involves woodwind or brass instruments.

- School teams will develop protocols to safely continue Fire and Lock Down Drills in the context of the state guidance for physical distancing.
- Guidance on the use of plexiglass/plastic barriers:
  - Younger students[2] may not be distanced less than 3 feet, even with the use of plexiglass/plastic barriers.
  - Older students may not be distanced less than 6 feet with use of plexiglass/plastic barriers.
  - Barriers should be securely installed on desk surfaces and be high enough to account for students sitting and/or standing behind them depending on their intended use.
  - Barriers may have gaps or separation between the desk surface and the bottom of the barrier, but should, at minimum, block the student's natural breathing zone (i.e. front and/or sides depending on room configuration) while sitting and/or standing.
  - Barriers should be cleaned and disinfected regularly, using the same protocol as desktops and other surfaces. o For more information about use of barriers, see the [American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine](#).

Communal Spaces, Large Group Activities and Special Programming
- Large group activities must conform to the maximum number allowed by current state guidance.
- School sponsored or school supported before- and after-school programs may continue, but attendance records must be kept.
- Libraries can be opened if physical distancing can be achieved (no congregating) and restricted to one consistent cohort of students (pods). If the library cannot be opened or must be closed, schools need to work with librarians and officials to find alternative ways to ensure their students' access to library materials.
- Outdoor recess space where students can keep physical distance may be opened.
- Indoor individual activities with the potential to generate increased respiratory droplets and aerosols (such as solo singing or woodwind performances) should be avoided.
  - However, if the student is the only occupant of a well-ventilated room (see section on ventilation), this is permissible. Singers should remain masked for the entire time. Musicians should wear a mask with a slit and mask the instrument for the entire time. Once finished, no other person should enter the room for at least 20 minutes.
  - Theater (non-musical) may occur with facial coverings and physical distancing. Any performer contact should be brief and low intensity.
- School-sponsored/associated events and extracurricular activities (sports, theater, etc.) may occur in accordance with parameters outlined by the Governor.
  - School-sponsored/supported activities must abide by all expectations set forth in this guidance.
  - Guidance on scholastic sports can be found on the AOE's website.
- There should be no spectators for any indoor activities. Schools should use virtual methods to broadcast these events.
- Physical education may occur with the following parameters:
  - Facial coverings must be worn.

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[2] Younger students are defined as grades PreK-6; older students are defined as grades 7-12.

- Students should be physically distanced; contact should be limited.
- The use of shared equipment is allowable and should be cleaned according to pre-COVID-19 protocols.
- Students must practice appropriate hand hygiene, especially in between using shared equipment and before and after PE class.
- It is strongly preferred to take students outside whenever possible, where they can be more active in a safer environment; see sections below on the use of gymnasiums.
- Schools should reference [Safety and Health Guidance FAQ 7: Physical Education](#) for details on PE curriculum requirements and recommendations for activities that meet these requirements in the context of COVID-19.

Cafeteria/Lunch

In Level 2, the cafeteria is closed for lunch. Students will eat in classrooms. In Level 3, the cafeteria may be used as long as physical and social distancing can be maintained. Schools should ensure that groups of students do not come into contact with each other upon entry and exit of communal spaces.

Recess

- Require students to stay in an assigned section of the school yard as opposed to mingling with other groups
- Staff should continue to reinforce physical distancing during playground play.

Student Bathrooms

Bathroom use should be kept to the groups that are already in cohorts together. Schedule restroom breaks to avoid overcrowding.

Field Trips

Field trips are only allowed if the program is able to maintain all health guidance in this document, as well as guidance from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, as it relates to public outdoor spaces and pools.

Extracurricular Activities

There will be no extracurricular activities at GISU schools during Level 2. These include intramural sports, after school clubs, theater, or any other events that mix students or adults outside of their school day cohorts.
Under Level 3, GISU schools will consider finding opportunities to allow for after school extracurricular activities that do not mix cohorts or schools.

Staff distancing (adult to adult)

- Install physical barriers in reception areas and employee workspaces where the environment does not accommodate physical distancing.

- Main Office parameters and signage should mandate maximum # of people within the space and distancing protocols. Develop alternative plans for tasks that currently involve a visit to the office.
- Staff room parameters and signage should mandate maximum # of people within the space and distancing protocols. Food prep only/no sit down eating.
- Adults should make every effort to maintain 6 ft distancing from other adults at all times.
- Virtual meetings should replace all in-person meetings and conferences.
- Adults in shared work spaces should separate their work stations to maintain 6 ft distancing.

Safe and Healthy Behavior Expectations

- Face Masks/Shields: All staff and students are required to wear facial coverings while in the building, as well as outside where physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- PreK students require special consideration regarding age and child development.
- Facial coverings are developmentally appropriate when children can properly put on, take off, and not touch or suck on the covering.
- Students who have a medical or behavioral reason for not wearing a facial covering should not be required to wear one. These decisions should be made in partnership with the health care provider and school nurse.
- Students/staff should not wear facial coverings while sleeping, eating or swimming (or when they would get wet).
- Facial coverings with ties are not recommended for young children as they pose a risk of choking or strangulation.
- Facial coverings may be removed during outdoor activities where students and staff can maintain physical distancing and have ready access to put them back as needed when activity stops.
- Staff may take off their facial covering in select circumstances when physical distancing cannot be maintained, such as when a parent/caregiver is hearing impaired and reads lips to communicate. It is also recommended to use facial coverings with clear plastic windows to support communication when there is ongoing contact with individuals who are hearing impaired.
- The use of clear facial shields for students and adults is allowable as long as they meet all of the health guidance of the Vermont Department of Health. Face shields should extend below the chin and to the ears laterally, and there should be no exposed gap between the forehead and the shield's headpiece.

Hand Hygiene:

Schools must put the following procedures into practice to ensure effective hand hygiene: Provide plenty of hand lotion to support healthy skin for students and staff. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If hands are not visibly dirty, alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol can be used if soap and water are not readily available (monitor for ingestion of hand sanitizer among young children).

- All students, staff and contracted service providers should engage in hand hygiene at the following times:

- Arrival to the facility
- After staff breaks
- Before and after preparing food or drinks
- Before and after eating, handling food or feeding students
- Before and after administering medication or medical ointment
- After using the toilet or helping a child use the bathroom
- After coming in contact with bodily fluid
- Before and after handling facial coverings/face shields
- After handling animals or cleaning up animal waste
- After playing outdoors
- Before and after playing with sand and sensory play
- After handling garbage
- Before and after cleaning
- Prior to switching rooms or locations
- After assisting students with handwashing, staff should also wash their hands.
- Place posters describing handwashing steps near sinks.

Limit sharing of materials:

Keep each student's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, cubbies or areas. Used items should be taken home each day and cleaned.
Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high touch materials (art supplies, lab equipment, computer equipment etc. assigned to a single student) or limit use of supplies and equipment by one group of students at a time and clean and disinfect between use.
Do not share electronic devices, toys, books, musical instruments, games or learning aids.

Record keeping protocols

Each GISU school will take measures so that persons exposed can be more easily traced. This may include:
- Use assigned seating for each class.
- Take attendance for every class and include all staff/contractors who were in the classroom.
- Use sign-in sheets for in-person meetings to document attendees.
- Keep accurate records of any persons other than students and staff that enter the building, their reason for being there, names of the people they came within 6 feet of and the locations in the building they visit.
- Provide a name and contact number for the COVID Coordinator or school or SU/SD leadership when a family has a positive COVID-19 case to the family so they can notify the coordinator in off hours and share with the contact tracing team.
- Staff should be encouraged to keep a daily list of other people they are in close contact with. As the state reopens, Vermonters should consider keeping a contact journal. If you do get sick, this will make it easier to get in touch with those people, and so they can take proper precautions to prevent further spreading of the coronavirus.

<h1 style="text-align:center">Perimeter Screening Protocol</h1>

All GISU students/their families and staff must conduct daily monitoring for COVID-19 **exposure** and **symptoms**.

- Exposure is defined as: close contact with a person who has COVID-19 within the last 14 days. Based on our current knowledge, a close contact is someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 48 hours before illness onset until the time the patient is isolated.
- COVID-19 symptoms include the following: ● Cough ● Fever (100.4 or greater) ● Shortness of breath ● Chills ● Fatigue ● Muscle pain or body aches ● Headache ● Sore throat ● Loss of taste or smell ● Congestion or runny nose ● Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea (diarrhea is defined as frequent loose or watery stools compared to child's normal pattern)

All GISU students will have a Daily Health Screening/Check at their first point of contact. The Daily Health Screening/Check will include having their temperature taken and answering a few questions about COVID-19 symptoms, exposure, temperature check, and travel screen to [counties not eligible for quarantine free trave](#)l.

Each GISU school will develop a plan to meet these minimal expectations:

- Transportation
  - Encourage parents/caregivers or other designated adults to transport their children, whenever possible, to minimize the number of students on the bus.
  - Encourage students to walk or bike to school, if it is safe to do so.
- Busing
  - Each school within the district will develop a process to receive parental/caregiver and staff reports regarding exposure and symptoms. Schools may choose to ask students/staff to do symptom monitoring at home or upon boarding the bus or prior to entering the school building.
  - If a school choses to screen prior to bus entry, a caregiver over the age of 18 must be at the bus stop in the event a student does not pass the screening procedure.
  - Schools should conduct temperature screening of students. This should occur at the first point of contact. If it is not feasible on the bus, then it should be conducted on entrance to the schoolThe screening personnel must wear a face covering, eye protection and gloves.
    - The Daily Health Check will screen for:
      - Reported or visible symptoms of COVID-19, such as a cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell.
      - Close contact with someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days
      - Fever (temperature higher than 100.4°F)
  - Bus drivers are required to wear facial coverings while transporting students.

- All students are required to wear facial coverings on the bus (with noted exceptions in Facial Coverings and Personal Protective Equipment).
- Cohort students by age on the school bus (younger students in the front, middle-age students in the middle, older students in the back).
- Create physical distance between students and on school buses (for example, seating students one child per seat, every other row).
- Stagger drop-off and pick-up processes to minimize gathering of large numbers of students at any one time.
- If necessary, create more bus stops to minimize the number of students waiting together.
- Assign seats for students on the school bus.
- Mountain Transit will be responsible for cleaning and disinfecting the bus.
- Winter Weather Considerations :
  - As the colder weather begins to approach, transportation providers (school buses) must consider the health and welfare of all passengers on the bus while at the same time ensuring they remain as comfortable as possible. It is recommended that transportation providers do the following:
    - Regardless of weather conditions, maintain constant airflow through the interior of the bus by:
      - Having at least 4 windows open ▪ 2 windows in the front of the bus (each of the front passenger seats) ▪ 2 windows in the rear of the bus (very last windows on each side of the bus) o Keeping the driver's window open, basing the opening amount on weather conditions. Preferably the windows should remain fully open, however, if inclement weather mandates window openings be reduced to prevent snow, ice, rain from coming in then the opening should be reduced.
      - If window openings are reduced more windows should be opened. Leaving roof hatches partially open, weather permitting. Hatches should be opened on the rearward side.
      - Maintain a suitable temperature on the bus
      - Recommend students wear weather appropriate clothing
      - Utilize heaters, per vendor instructions, to maintain a suitable interior temperature

Health Screenings

All students and staff must have a Daily Health Check at the first point of contact.

- The Daily Health Check will screen for:
  - Reported or visible symptoms of COVID-19, such as a cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell.
  - Close contact with someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days

- - Fever (temperature higher than 100.4°F)
  - Travel screen to [counties not eligible for quarantine free travel](#)
- Students or staff exhibiting or reporting any of these symptoms will be excluded from entering the building.
- Schools should ensure that students arriving by bus who have already been screened, are not "mixing" with students arriving by other means who have not yet been screened.
- Each school should designate separate entrances for pre-screened bus students, walk-ins and staff members.

Drop-Off and Pick-up /Arrival and Departure

- Signs must be posted at all entrances clearly indicating that **no one** may enter if they have symptoms of respiratory illness or fever. (See appendix for sign samples)
- Hand sanitizing stations must be set up at the entrance of the facility or the entrance process could be rerouted through a different entrance nearest the sink, so that students can sanitize/wash their hands before they enter, or immediately upon entry into the facility.
- Assign students to use different entrances at arrival and departure times or stagger arrival and departure times.
- Students should go directly to their assigned classroom once they have completed all required screening.
- Parents/caregivers should not be allowed to enter the building with the student. Parents/caregivers must wear a facial covering and should drop off their child outside and leave as soon as their child has safely entered the building to avoid congregating.
  - Preschool classrooms may need to identify a separate entrance and exit given the age of the student so the parent/caregiver may briefly walk the child into the classroom and leave. Parent must be screened.
  - In the first few days of return to school, the parents/caregivers of younger students and students with anxiety may escort their children to the classroom in coordination with the school after screening.
  - All parents/caregivers who enter the school building must wear a facial covering, be screened upon entry (DHC) and must leave immediately.
  - If a parent/caregiver needs to talk with school personnel, they should make arrangements to do so in advance and via phone or online rather than in person.
- Individuals who are self-quarantining due to close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual should not do drop-off or pick-up.
- Departure should be structured or staggered to avoid congregating inside or outside the building.

Parameters for Visitors: No outside visitors and volunteers except for employees or contracted service providers for the purpose of special education or required support services, as authorized by the school or district.

- A single entrance should be designated for non-staff to request entry to the building where they have immediate access to screening protocols.
- Except for special exceptions or emergencies, parents may not enter the building.
- Anyone with a valid reason to enter the building must sign in with name and phone number, wear a mask, consent to a health check as above, avoid mingling with students or staff, and leave immediately upon completion of their business.
- Staff have the right to deny entry to anyone who refuses to follow these expectations.

Building & Facilities

Use of Outdoor Play Structures:

GISU School Playgrounds may be opened for usage during the school day under the supervision of school staff. Playground structures may be used under the following conditions:

- A handwashing or sanitizing station must be available on the playground during school hours.

Under Level 3, GISU Playground Structures may be opened to the public with signage indicating the structures are not sanitized and the public should use at their own risk.

Building Cleaning & Disinfecting Protocol

Routine cleaning and disinfecting is key to maintaining a safe environment for faculty, students, and staff. Schools must engage in frequent thorough cleaning each day. At a minimum, common spaces and frequently touched surfaces and doors should be cleaned and disinfected at the beginning, middle, and end of each day. This may include cleaning objects/surfaces not ordinarily cleaned daily (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, classroom sink handles, countertops).

Collaboration between custodial staff and classroom teachers and staff to meet the cleaning and disinfection guidelines will be essential.

Preventing the Spread of Covid-19

The virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly spread by respiratory droplets. When someone infected with COVID-19 coughs or sneezes, respiratory droplets that contain the virus are expelled and can be breathed in by someone nearby. Although the virus cannot enter the body through the skin, respiratory droplets carrying the virus can get into your airways or mucous membranes of your eyes, nose, or mouth to infect you. The virus can also be spread if you touch

a surface contaminated with virus and then touch your eyes, nose or mouth. Increased cleaning and disinfection combined with hand washing will lower the spread of illness.

Agency of Education/Department of Health Guidelines for Schools

Schools must engage in frequent thorough cleaning each day. All staff should be trained in proper cleaning and disinfecting. At a minimum, common spaces and frequently touched surfaces and doors should be cleaned and disinfected at the beginning, middle and end of each day. Schools shall continue to follow regulations regarding cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting.

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as:
    - High-touched surfaces in bathrooms, such as handles, toilets, faucets
    - Shared computer keyboards and mice
    - Door handles and handrails
    - Faucet and drinking fountain handles
    - Items students place in their mouths, including toys
- Specifically, regarding shared bathrooms, bathroom use should be kept to the groups that are already in cohorts together. Schedule restroom breaks to avoid overcrowding.
- Toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized should not be used, including items such as soft toys, dress-up clothes and puppets.
- Unnecessary cloth furniture (or furniture that is difficult to clean) should be removed from the classroom and other spaces.
- Students' books, art supplies and other paper-based materials such as mail or envelopes, are not considered high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning or disinfection procedures.
- Desks that the same student sits at do not need to be disinfected multiple times a day.
- Desks that students eat at should be cleaned with routine cleaner or soap and water following snack/mealtime.
- Develop a protocol to ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaners and disinfectants, including storing products securely away from students.
- Given regular cleaning and disinfecting, additional deep cleaning is not needed on a weekly basis.
- Given regular cleaning and disinfecting, additional deep cleaning is not needed on a weekly basis.
- When managing accidental large volume spills or body fluids such as vomit or urine from non-porous surfaces that require cleaning fluids, mopping equipment, and or prolonged drying times the risk of generating potentially pathogenic microorganisms can be reduced by:
    - Removing as much of the material before cleaning and disinfecting,
    - Thoroughly disinfecting the remaining material and surfaces.

- ○ Following manufacture's guidance on vacuum filters (like a HEPA filter) to capture ultrafine particles like viruses.
- ○ Properly removing soiled items.
- ○ Closing the space for use until items are clean and dry if mechanical cleaning equipment is used or fans are required for drying.
- ○ Discouraging the use of machines that aerosolize particles, e.g. steam cleaners or some carpet cleaners.
- ○ Wearing of appropriate PPE by cleaning personnel as recommended by product or equipment manufacturers.

Know the difference between Cleaning and Disinfecting

Cleaning with soap and water removes germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces. It lowers the risk of spreading infection.
Disinfecting kills germs on surfaces. By killing germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.

Clean with the cleaners typically used. Use all cleaning products according to the directions on the label. Soap and water in a spray bottle or bucket and paper towels or clothes are recommended for cleaning. Cleaning wipes can also be used.

For disinfection most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available at the EPA website. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).

The following products may be used for disinfecting:
• Diluted household bleach solutions
• Alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol
• Most common EPA-registered household disinfectants
• See List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 (Environmental Protection Agency)

Teacher/Staff Cleaning Protocol in Classroom

Cleaning in the classroom:
- ● Utilize basic cleaning supplies as needed during the day. Soap and water works best for cleaning surfaces. Use a spray bottle with soapy water, or a bucket and cloth or paper towels for cleaning. Cleaning wipes can also be used.
- ● Students can assist with cleaning with soap and water.
- ● Students should clean desks or work surfaces after use, especially if another student

will be using the space.
- Wash hands after cleaning surfaces
- Clean frequently used surfaces such as desks, tables, and countertops.
- Cleaning should be done regularly after meals and when surfaces are dirty
- Routine handwashing in addition to surface cleaning will lower the risk of spread of illness.

Disinfecting in the classroom:
- Disinfecting should occur once during the day in the classroom
  - Clean visibly dirty surfaces first with soap and water, then use a disinfectant to sanitize surfaces.
  - Pick an ideal time to disinfect midday, preferably after students have eaten lunch.
- Disinfect frequently used surfaces such as desks, doorknobs, and faucets.
- Staff will only use disinfectant provided or approved by the custodial staff or the nurse and is recommended to be an EPA approved disinfectant.
- Read disinfecting labels carefully, wear gloves to protect your skin and eye protection if spraying. Do not mix chemicals.
- Avoid overuse of disinfectant products, and ensure good ventilation.
- Wear gloves during disinfecting, and wash hands immediately after removing them.

Student safety regarding cleaning:
- Due to potential exacerbation of other health concerns (ie asthma), students should not use disinfectant cleaners such as Clorox or Lysol wipes, to clean classrooms.
- If able, disinfect surfaces when students are not in the classroom.
- Students may use alcohol wipes to clean electronics. Younger students should be supervised.
- Keep disinfectant products (Lysol, Clorox, etc) out of the reach of children

Electronics:
- Computers, laptops, I-pads, and other electronics with screens can be cleaned with wipes containing 70% alcohol
- Allow to air dry
- Electronics should be cleaned between students or staff
- Encourage hand washing before and after using electronics

Toys and Manipulatives:
- Toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized should not be used.
- Toys that children have placed in their mouths or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretions or excretions should be set aside until they are cleaned by hand by a person wearing gloves. Clean with water and detergent, rinse, sanitize (recommended to use an EPA-registered disinfectant), rinse again, and air-dry. You may also clean in a mechanical dishwasher. Be mindful of items more likely to be placed in a child's mouth, like play food, dishes, and utensils.

- Machine washable cloth toys should be used by one individual at a time or should not be used at all. These toys should be laundered before being used by another child.
- Do not share toys with other groups of students, unless they are washed and sanitized before being moved from one group to the other.
- Set aside toys that need to be cleaned. Place in a dish pan with soapy water or put in a separate container marked for "soiled toys." Washing with soapy water is the ideal method for cleaning. Try to have enough toys so that the toys can be rotated through cleanings.
- Children's books, like other paper-based materials such as mail or envelopes, are not considered a high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning or disinfection procedures.

Other considerations:
- Remove unnecessary cloth furniture or throw rugs from classrooms and other spaces
- Remove items that cannot be easily cleaned such as soft toys, cloth items, dress-up clothes
- Students are encouraged to have their own school supplies (pencils, markers, rulers, etc) to limit contact exposure. Students' books, art supplies and other paper-based materials such as mail or envelopes, are not considered high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning or disinfection procedures.
- It is not necessary to routinely apply disinfectants to surfaces that are not high-touch or high-risk (e.g., floors, bookcases, tops of filing cabinets). Soft surfaces such as carpets, rugs, and drapes can be cleaned using soap and water or a cleaner appropriate for the material.

Office Staff Cleaning Protocol

Clean and disinfect at least daily (or more, depending on use patterns) frequently touched surfaces and objects such as:
- Shared telephones
- Shared desktops
- Shared computer keyboards and mice
- Countertops
- Light switches
- Shared radios

It is not necessary to routinely apply disinfectants to surfaces that are not high-touch or high-risk (e.g., floors, bookcases, tops of filing cabinets).

Note: Computer keyboards are difficult to clean. Proper hand hygiene before and after using them to minimize disease transmission. Consider keyboard shields for frequently shared keyboards that can be easily cleaned and removed.

Cleaning of Face Shields and Face Cloth Coverings

- Face shields should be cleaned following manufacturer's instructions.
  - While wearing gloves, carefully wipe the inside, followed by the outside of the face shield or goggles using a clean cloth saturated with a soap and water solution or cleaner wipe.
  - Carefully wipe the outside of the face shield or goggles using a wipe or clean cloth saturated with recommended EPA-registered disinfectant solution.
  - Wipe the outside of the face shield or goggles with clean water or alcohol to remove residue.
  - Fully dry (air dry or use clean absorbent towels).
  - Remove gloves and perform hand hygiene.
- Cloth face coverings should be laundered at home regularly by the wearer and changed if visibly soiled or wet. Staff and students should be encouraged to have 2-3 extra masks at school in the event their mask becomes wet or soiled.
- The CDC provides guidance for the use and care of cloth face covering and face shields. Review the Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19.

Custodial Cleaning Protocol in School Buildings

Clean and disinfect at least daily (or more, depending on use patterns) frequently touched surfaces and objects such as:

- Bathrooms
- Door knobs and handles
- Stair rails
- Classroom desks and chairs
- Lunchroom tables and chairs
- Countertops

- Handrails
- Light switches
- Handles on equipment (e.g., athletic equipment)
- Push-buttons on vending machines and elevators

Routine Cleaning Procedures
- Wear disposable gloves to clean and disinfect.
- Clean surfaces using soap and water, then use disinfectant.
- Cleaning with soap and water reduces the number of germs, dirt and impurities on the surface. Disinfecting kills germs on surfaces.
- Practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces. More frequent cleaning and disinfection may be required based on level of use.
- High touch surfaces include: Tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.

Routine Disinfecting Procedures

- Recommend use of [EPA-registered household disinfectant](#)
- Follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product.
- Many products recommend:
    - Keeping the surface wet for a period of time (see product label).
    - Precautions such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.
- **Always read and follow the directions on the label to ensure safe and effective use.**
- Wear skin protection and consider eye protection for potential splash hazards
- Ensure adequate ventilation
- Use no more than the amount recommended on the label
- Use water at room temperature for dilution (unless stated otherwise on the label)
- Avoid mixing chemical products
- Label diluted cleaning solutions
- Store and use chemicals out of the reach of children

You should never eat, drink, breathe or inject these products into your body or apply directly to your skin as they can cause serious harm.

See [EPA's 6 steps for Safe and Effective Disinfectant Use](#)

Special considerations should be made for people with asthma and they should not be present when cleaning and disinfecting is happening as this can trigger asthma

Use diluted household bleach solutions, if appropriate for the surface. However:
- Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.
- Use eye protection or have immediate access to an eyewash station.
- Leave solution on a surface for at least 1 minute.
    To make a bleach solution, mix:
    - 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of room temperature water OR
    - 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of room temperature water
- Bleach solutions will be effective for disinfection up to 24 hours.
- Alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol may also be used.

Soft Surfaces and Carpet Cleaning

For soft surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes

- Clean the surface using soap and water or with cleaners appropriate for use on these surfaces.
- Launder items (if possible) according to the manufacturer's instructions.Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.
  OR
- Disinfect with a disinfectant (recommend to use EPA-registered household disinfectant). These disinfectants meet EPA's criteria for use against COVID-19.

Vacuuming

After cleaning and disinfection, the following recommendations may help reduce the risk to workers and other individuals when vacuuming:

- Consider removing smaller rugs or carpets from the area completely, so there is less that needs to be vacuumed.
- Use a vacuum equipped with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter, if available.
- Do not vacuum a room or space that has people in it. Wait until the room or space is empty to vacuum, such as at night, for common spaces, or during the day for private rooms.
- Consider temporarily turning off room fans and the central HVAC system that services the room or space, so that particles that escape from vacuuming will not circulate throughout the facility.

Laundry

For clothing, towels, linens and other items

- Launder items according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.
- Wear disposable gloves when handling dirty laundry from a person who is sick.
- Dirty laundry from a person who is sick can be washed with other people's items.
- Do not shake dirty laundry.
- Clean and disinfect clothes hampers according to guidance above for surfaces.
- Remove gloves, and wash hands right away.

Safety Precautions and Protection for the Custodial Staff

The risk of getting COVID-19 from cleaning is low. The following are general precautions for cleaning staff, given that community transmission of COVID-19 is occurring:

- Staff must wear face masks while cleaning to prevent recontaminating clean surfaces.
- Staff should not touch their face while cleaning and only after they can wash hands after cleaning.

- Cleaning staff should wear washable work clothes and disposable gloves when cleaning and handling trash. Cleaning staff should change clothes at the end of a shift. It may be helpful for them to keep a change of clothes at work.
- Additional personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gowns or goggles/face shields might be required based on the cleaning/disinfectant products being used and whether there is a risk of splash.
- Clothing worn while cleaning should be placed in a plastic bag until it can be laundered. Laundering should be done as soon as possible and done safely at home.
- Cleaning staff should thoroughly wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after gloves are removed.
- Staff who are responsible for cleaning and disinfecting should be trained to use disinfectants safely and effectively and to safely clean up potentially infectious materials and body fluids – blood, vomit, feces, and urine.
- Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing products securely away from children.
- All cleaning staff should be trained on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals used in the workplace in accordance with OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard 29 CFR 1910.1200.

Ventilation & HVAC systems

Each GISU school will develop a plan to meet these minimal expectations:
- Buildings must be cleaned throughout the day and every evening based on the CDC Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting.
- Prior to re-occupancy, ensure the school ventilation system is properly cleaned and meets all required operating standards per manufacturer.
- Prior to re-occupancy, operate HVAC systems in occupied mode for a minimum period of one week while assuring the outside air dampers are open.
- Encourage staff to provide additional outside time and open windows frequently when air conditioning is not being used. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, noise or triggering asthma symptoms).
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air. The following modifications to building HVAC system operation should be considered, as recommended by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE):
  - Increase outdoor air ventilation (disable demand-controlled ventilation and open outdoor air dampers to 100% as indoor and outdoor conditions permit).
  - Improve central air and other HVAC filtration to MERV-13 (ASHRAE 2017b) or the highest level achievable. Change filters every 3-4 months.
  - Keep HVAC systems running longer hours (24/7 if possible, but a minimum of two hours prior to occupancy and through the duration of occupancy). Keep

bathroom exhaust fans operating 24/7 on school days. Ensure staff understand the importance of ventilation fans – they must run all day.
- ○ Add portable air cleaners to classrooms. Use HEPA or high-MERV filters with due consideration to the clean air delivery rate (AHAM 2015).
- ○ Maintain temperature and humidity as applicable to the infectious aerosol of concern. Typically temperature should be maintained between 68-78°F and humidity between 40-60%.
- ○ Take appropriate precautions when servicing HVAC Systems and replacing filters (wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), bag and dispose of filters in regular trash, immediately wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer).
- ○ Where feasible, the school nurse's office/isolation room should have:
  - ■ Dedicated HVAC system
  - ■ Dedicated restroom (ideal)
  - ■ Exhaust directly outdoors
  - ■ Maintain negative pressure to adjoining spaces
- ● Nurse office suite design should follow health care facilities design practices as described in standards such as ASHRAE Standard 170 and other applicable guidelines and design information.

For more information see ASHRAE Epidemic Taskforce Schools & Universities (https://www.ashrae.org/file%20library/technical%20resources/covid-19/ashrae-reopening-schools.pdf)

For additional recommendations, please refer to the Agency of Education String & Health Start Documentation.

Childcare Programming and Public Use of Building:

- ● Childcare Programs
  - ○ Must meet all school day building safety protocols or provide an alternative plan that is approved by administration.
- ● There are very few things the public should be using the building for. School facilities may be used for the following public uses:
  - ○ Elections
  - ○ Blood drives
  - ○ Emergency shelter and food distribution, at the discretion of the State Emergency Operations Center
  - ○ SAT and ACT exam administration
  - ○ Other statewide assessments as needed, at the discretion of the Agency of Education.
- ● NEW Use of School Facilities and Elections (Updated: October 13, 2020): Formal, warned meetings held outside of in-person school hours by the municipality where the school is located. The school should only allow meetings it already hosted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. All public use should conform with current state health guidance around maximum number of participants and support physical distancing. Public use should be followed by thorough cleaning and disinfection using recommended

disinfection protocols and products. All participants should wear masks wherever possible and access to areas of the school not part of the public use should be restricted.

Health Office

Exclusion/Inclusion Guidelines

All students, families, and staff should conduct daily monitoring for EXPOSURE and SYMPTOMS.

Exposure is defined as: close contact with a person who has COVID-19 within the last 14 days. Based on our current knowledge, a close contact is someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period starting from 48 hours before illness onset until the time the patient is isolated. If the person was asymptomatic when tested, the infectious period would start 48 hours before the test was conducted. Students will be excluded from in-person activities if they have been exposed to a person who has had COVID-19 within the last 14 days.

Students (and staff) will be excluded from in-person school and sports activities and require immediate pick-up at school if they exhibit any of the symptoms consistent with COVID-19 High Risk Symptoms.

COVID-19 symptoms include the following:
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Loss of taste or smell
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea (diarrhea is defined as frequent loose or watery stools compared to child's
   normal pattern)
- Fever (100.4 or greater)
- Chills
- Muscle pain or body aches
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose

Other exclusion signs and symptoms that may or may not be related to COVID-19:
- Active vomiting, diarrhea, and/or abdominal pain
- Nasal congestion and/or yellow drainage
- Sore throat
- Unexplained muscle or body aches, headaches, or fatigue
- Fever or chills (temp greater than 100.4)
- Undiagnosed, new, and/or untreated rash or skin condition

Students should be excluded from school until they are no longer considered contagious. **Students and staff with fever greater than 100.4°F and no specific diagnosis should remain at home until they have had no fever for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications (e.g., Advil, Tylenol).** A physician's note may be requested for re-entry.

Materials, toys and furniture touched by the student who is sent home should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Soft goods that cannot be properly disinfected should be put in quarantine for no less than 3 days.

Healthy students and staff with the following symptoms/conditions are not excluded from inperson school activities:
- Allergy symptoms (with no fever) that cause coughing and clear runny nose may stay if they have medically diagnosed allergies and follow medical treatment plans.
- Well-controlled asthma

Travel

Students and staff who arrive from out-of-state must follow Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) and Health Department guidance around quarantine before returning to school, which also applies to travel out-of-state at any point during the school year, including breaks and holidays. More information is available on the [Vermont Department of Health's COVID-19 travel site](#) and the [ACCD website](#). School leadership is encouraged to remind families and staff of these travel requirements periodically to ensure they are taking the appropriate steps when planning for travel or receiving guests from out of state. Information about travel that is considered essential (which does not require quarantine) and daily border travel to and from neighboring states can also be found on these sites.

Students who arrive from out-of-state must follow ACCD and Health Department guidance around quarantine before returning to school, which includes travel out-of-state at any point during the school year. More information is available on the [Vermont Department of Health's COVID-19 travel site](#).

GISU Schools will follow the COVID-19 PPE Standards & Health Office Isolation as outlined below:
- [COVID-19 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Guidance - v. 1.5](#)
- [NASN PPE Guidelines for Schools](#)
- All buildings must secure two separate areas (Clean and Isolation) to serve the school population.
    i. A Health Office should serve as the school's Clean office space to accommodate medication administration, triage students, health screenings, etc.
    ii. The school must have a separate Isolation room structured with a door. The isolation space must allow for ventilation to the outside. This space serves as an extension of a Health Office to accommodate symptomatic students and staff.
        1. Immediately isolate symptomatic people in the designated space at school and send them home as soon as possible. ▪ If multiple

symptomatic people must be placed in the same Isolation room, ensure that the symptomatic people are wearing masks and maintain at least 6 feet of distance between them. ▪ Develop cleaning processes for the Clean and Isolation spaces between uses for high touch surfaces and as needed. ▪ The Isolation room should be cleaned and disinfected following each use. This should happen as soon as practical—there is no need for delay. ▪ Ensure that symptomatic students who are waiting to be picked up remain under the visual supervision of a staff member who is at least 6 feet away. ▪ The symptomatic student(s) should wear a surgical mask, unless there is a medical or behavioral indication not to do so. If the supervising adult is inside the Isolation room, they should be wearing a minimum of a surgical mask and face shield as PPE.

GISU Schools will follow the [Vermont Immunization Requirements](#) as outlined.

GISU Schools will follow the [Vermont Department of Health](#) steps as outlined for contact tracing. Please note that while this Strong and Healthy Schools guidance allows younger students to be spaced 3 feet apart, contact tracing questions are different. During contact tracing by the Health Department, the goal is to identify and exclude individuals from school if there is any risk that they might develop COVID-19, which, out of an abundance of caution, includes staff and students who have been within 6 feet of the person with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. Public health leaders work closely with educational leaders to align principles of science, public health and child development. It is recommended that assigned seats and seating charts be maintained to aid in contact tracing.

School administrators will likely be asked to complete a line list of people who had close contact with the individual. This could include classmates, teachers, other staff, paraeducators, specialty class instructors, contractors, etc.
- This list can be built by using any of the following: ● Seating charts ● Class schedules ● Staff movement, including teachers, paraeducators, custodial staff, contractors and others ● Bus seating charts ● Attendance records ● Activity participation records, etc.
- Schools will also be asked: ● What is the contact information for the close contacts? ● Have any of the close contacts had symptoms?
- This line list may change over the course of contact tracing, as new information is learned from contacts and school administrators.

Cases of COVID-19 in School

If COVID-19 is confirmed in a student or staff member:
- The person diagnosed with COVID-19 should isolate according to guidelines set forth by the Vermont Department of Health.
- Staff or students who have been identified as a close contact should quarantine
- Open outside doors and windows and use ventilating fans to increase air circulation in the area. *
- Once an individual is sent to isolation, clean and disinfect all high-touch areas potentially

used by the person after the sick individual has left the classroom or other space that they were in. This should happen as soon as practical - there is no need for delay. This may include the student's desk and chair, door handles, etc. (It will likely not be known whether this individual has a diagnosis of COVID019 at this time.)

- Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing products securely away from children.
- Participate in contact tracing as requested by the Health Department. *
- Communicate with staff and parents/caregivers with general information about the situation. It is critical to maintain confidentiality.

Decisions about school closure should be made based on guidance from the Agency of Education. Anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 should self-isolate according to guidelines set forth by the Vermont Department of Health. If a staff person or student has been identified as a close contact to someone who is diagnosed with COVID-19, they should self-quarantine: stay home. Please refer to the Health Department's website for what it means to be in close contact and for instructions for isolation, quarantine, and self-observation.

Please contact the Health Office for questions or concerns.

Social/Emotional Learning

The GISU utilizes the CASEL definition of social emotional. CASEL defines social emotional as: "how children and adults learn to understand and manage emotions, set goals, show empathy for others, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions."

Each GISU School will coordinate with families, school staff, and community and State resources to assess and assist in the psychological and emotional recovery of staff and students:

- In partnership with mental health partners, develop and implement universal social and emotional screenings in order to identify students who need support.
- Recognize that all students have had different experiences from COVID-19 and not everyone in the school will be in the same place. Be prepared to validate that some students are disappointed, some had fun, some are grieving, some are exhausted from added responsibilities at home, some have experienced trauma and some preferred remote learning and are reluctant to return.
- Establish a process, including community, social services and mental health partners, to help identify and provide support to students or staff at potentially higher risk for significant stress or trauma from COVID-19. This should involve triage to see who needs crisis intervention and support. Consider:
  - Those who have experienced a death
  - Those with significant disruptions to their lifestyle (food insecurity, financial insecurity)
  - Those with a history of trauma and chronic stress or pre-existing mental health problems

- ○ Those with exposure to abuse and neglect
- ○ Those who have experienced significant anxiety, depression and/or suicidal ideation
- Develop a referral system for individuals who need targeted supports and/or community services.
- Develop strategies and supports for students, families and staff members for each phase of recovery (before reopening, immediately after reopening and long-term support).
- Develop social emotional supports for the potential of schools re-closing and/or a need to stay home and isolate due to exposure to the virus or becoming infected with the virus.
- Teach students how to screen themselves, take care of themselves and protect themselves during COVID-19.
- Explain, in a developmentally appropriate way, to students why school looks different and how changes are linked to individual, family and community safety.

Addressing Staff Needs:

Schools recognize that the social emotional health and well-being of staff is important to the social emotional health and well-being of the students and their families:

- Identify community resources available to support school staff.
- Increase communication efforts to ensure school staff are aware of the district's employee wellness benefits (e.g., employee assistance programs, mental health and wellness insurance coverage, FMLA)
- Work with human resources to determine procedures for staff to take sick leave due to COVID-19 concerns for themselves and/or their family.
- Establish system-wide approaches to address secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue (e.g., tap in, tap out; buddy classrooms; boundary setting; self-care).

Addressing Family Needs:

Schools understand that families will need support to feel comfortable sending their children back to school and to help implement the new guidelines during COVID-19:

- Ensure that all efforts to engage and communicate with families are culturally sensitive. Ensure all written and oral communications are available in easily accessible formats, with multiple languages and translation services upon request.
- Provide activities to help families feel comfortable sending their children back to school such as:
  - ○ Back-to-school open houses at the school or in the community, with the ability to ask questions, meet teachers and request opportunities to talk with school employed mental health staff, with appropriate COVID-19 precautions in place.
  - ○ A dry run of getting to school before school starts.
- Engage families to get a better understanding of their concerns regarding student needs and ways to collaborate to support a successful re-entry plan.
- Work with families to identify those who may need assistance with food, clothing and other basic needs.

GISU Schools are committed to:

- Find opportunities to increase guidance and SEL lessons during in-class time and remote opportunities. Work with librarians to find classroom read alouds that support SEL.
- Many of our guidance counselors use the Second Step program. Have them refer to and use the Covid resources provided: https://www.secondstep.org/covid19support
- Emphasis on morning meetings and afternoon meetings.
- Enhance guidance counselors' schedules for remote check ins.
- Have a referral form for students exhibiting anxiety/stress for referral to guidance counselor or school clinician if applicable.
- Create and meet as a SEL team to discuss best practices and support for identified students.
- Have a release form for parents to sign for students to be able to speak with a counselor or clinician in a therapeutic setting.
- Allow for lunch bunches when space and social distancing is applicable.
- Remind students/staff/parents/guardians as we transition back to school that it looks different now, and it's okay to be uncomfortable with that.
- Monitor students' mental health and look for signs of anxiety or depression (irritability, defiant behavior, physical ailments, loss of interest in school, simply not seeming like him/herself).

Please see the Appendix for resources related to Social / Emotional Learning.

Food Service

The GISU recognizes the lifelong impacts on health and learning caused by malnutrition. It is important to ensure that students have uninterrupted access to adequate nutrition through the food service program, no matter whether the school is in Step I, II or III. This is particularly important because the ongoing economic impacts of COVID-19 may mean that many more children are currently facing food insecurity at home.

Current information suggests that food and food packaging are not known sources of COVID-19 transmission. School Food Service staff receive regular food safety training and are already knowledgeable about preventing foodborne illness.

The GISU schools will communicate to households that school meals programs are a safe and nutritious source of food, and make school meals applications available to households throughout the year to ensure that households with changing economic circumstances are aware of this form of assistance. Because households are especially likely to be facing food insecurity this year, consider referring households to additional forms of food assistance, such as 3SquaresVT and WIC. Consider offering free meals to all students ("Universal Meals") using

Provision 2 or the Community Eligibility Provision. Because of temporarily higher rates of household poverty this year, this may be more financially achievable for the SU/SD than in prior years.

General Guidance (Step I, II, and III):

Continue to follow all food safety requirements in the Vermont Food Code. Have food service staff conduct frequent self-audits to ensure that these practices are being followed. Key areas to check include:

- Correct dishwasher temperatures for sanitization
- Employee handwashing
- Cleaning and sanitizing surfaces
- Procedures for employees to calling in sick or doing non-food related duties when sick

HACCP plans may need to be adjusted to include new procedures.

GISU schools will implement plans for food service that:

- Consider how the kitchen receives deliveries of food and supplies.
  - Often, delivery drivers enter the school through the kitchen entrance, so may not be subject to normal visitor procedures. In some cases, it may be usual practice for the delivery driver to bring food directly into the walk-in refrigerator or freezer. These are small spaces frequently entered by kitchen staff. Work with kitchen staff and vendors to determine the safest way to handle deliveries. If the vendor will now deposit deliveries outside of the entrance, consider investing in dollies or having other staff members assist kitchen staff with moving deliveries into the kitchen to avoid workplace injuries.
- Evaluate kitchen workstations and modify them to allow for physical distancing.
  - If the kitchen is small, move workstations into the cafeteria/gym, if the cafeteria/gym is not in use.
  - Face workstations away from each other, such as towards the wall instead of toward the center of the room.
  - If there is a large food service staff, consider having the staff work in shifts during the day to reduce transmission opportunity.
- In Step I, consider two-week rotations with one shift working for two weeks, and the other shift staying at home.
- Consider methods for ensuring food service continuity if food service staff become sick or need to quarantine.
  - This could include setting up coverage from other schools within the SU/SD, or even setting up a reciprocal agreement with a neighboring SU/SD to provide meals. o The school could look into purchasing a supply of shelf-stable meals to be available in the event that food service staff need to stay home.

○ Ensure that food service substitutes have food safety training. Free web-based food safety training is available at any time from the Institute for Child Nutrition. Child Nutrition Programs also recommends these very basic training videos on hygiene, temperature control and sanitization from Iowa State University Cooperative Extension.

Guidance for Step I:

- Continue providing access to meals to students when the school building is closed, using the Summer Food Service Program during an unanticipated school closure. The AOE will be applying for USDA waivers to allow meal service to continue as it did in Spring 2020. These methods included:
    - Sending meals home with students on the last day of school for days when school is not in session (short-term closures)
    - Delivering meals to residences or bus stops
    - Providing meals for pickup
        - The AOE has issued extensive health and safety guidance on providing meals using these distribution methods. School food service staff are already very familiar with how to handle this situation. Discuss with them what additional resources they will need to be able to continue providing meals under this scenario.

Guidance for Step II:

With cafeterias closed, students should be offered school meals in their classrooms. If it is not feasible to provide service directly to classrooms, grab-and-go meal carts could be placed in dispersed locations for students from nearby classrooms to collect their meals in small groups. Or, students may go to the cafeteria classroom by classroom to collect their meals and return to their classroom to eat. If that method is used, sanitize all high touch surfaces in between groups.

- Food safety practices should be followed when serving perishable meals in the classroom. The best option is to serve meals immediately. However, if the meals will not be served immediately, hot holders and coolers should be used to keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.
- Plan for sanitization of eating areas, such as desks or tables. Classroom teachers may need to be provided with appropriate supplies for sanitizing desks and tables.
- Additional trash and janitorial services may be necessary when serving meals in the classroom.
- Meals should not be self-serve.
- Meals should be unitized, or an advance ordering system can be used to allow student choice about meal components. Advance ordering could be done through a paper preorder system in a smaller school, or web-based ordering systems are available from

some food service software vendors.
- Food Service Programs may need to purchase additional equipment to package meals efficiently for delivery to classrooms. Many types of packaging systems are available. Speak to other food service programs, particularly those that have experience offering breakfast in the classroom or summer meals, about which equipment works best for them.
- Ideally, a designated staff member or student should place meals on students' desks, to avoid students congregating to collect their meals from one location.

Guidance to Step III:

While students may return to eating in the cafeteria, consider maintaining meals in the classroom if it is working well.

- Meals should not be self-serve. Staff members can serve students, or pre-portioned items could be provided for students to choose from.
- If students are eating in the cafeteria, assign seating so students eat with their classmates and do not mingle with other classes. If the building has multiple cafeterias or common areas where students may eat, consider consistently assigning classrooms to one area or the other to reduce interaction between cohorts.
- Take steps to ensure social distancing when students are waiting to receive their meals.
- Stagger the classrooms going through the line or cafeteria to reduce interactions and number of students waiting at one time.
- If pin numbers are used, have a staff member enter the pin number on behalf of students.
- If student ID cards are handed in to count meals, sanitize the cards in between uses.
- Engineering controls such as sneeze guards should be installed in the cafeteria.

Guidance for both Step II and Step III:

If staggered student schedules are used to reduce the number of students in the building at any one time, ensure that schedules allow students access to both breakfast and lunch. This may mean following Step I options for providing meals to students at home.

- Masks should be worn during mealtimes anytime that a student is not actually eating/drinking. Masks should be on when the student is receiving their meal and when they are disposing of their trash and trays. Masks should only be removed when the student is about to start eating/drinking, and they should be replaced as soon as the student is done eating/drinking.
- Napkins and silverware should be provided directly by staff, not for individuals to grab.
- Pre-portion condiments and remove bulk condiment dispensers.
- Allow time for students to wash their hands prior to and after eating.
- Adults assisting students with their food should wash their hands before handling the

student's plate or lunch box, and wash or use hand sanitizer between the handling of the next student's lunch box. This includes staff helping students open milk cartons or peal fruit.

- Prohibit or limit food-sharing activities. Unless further guidance on how to operate share tables safely is issued by AOE and the Health Department, schools should discontinue the use of share tables for unwanted foods.
- Vending machines, drinking fountains and water bottle fillers should be frequently sanitized. Determine which staff members in the school will be responsible for this, particularly for vending machines and drinking fountains that are not operated by the food service program.

Additional COVID-19 guidance for food service programs can be found on the Agency of Education's COVID-19 webpage. The School Nutrition Association's Thought Starters in Reopening Schools for SY2020-21 is another good tool for thinking through all aspects of school food service during COVID-19.

Additional Guidance for Step III
While students may return to eating in the cafeteria, consider maintaining meals in the classroom if it is working well. If moving meal service to the cafeteria, take the following measures:

Cafeteria Capacity, Seating and Spacing
- Cafeteria capacity should be limited to ensure that minimum physical distancing is achieved (A minimum of 3 feet for PreK through Grade 6; 6 feet for Grades 7 through 12).
- Schools should ensure that groups of students do not come into contact with each other upon entry and exit the cafeteria; classrooms should be staggered going through the line. The total capacity should not exceed the current state or local limits on indoor gathering size, as indicated on the ACCD website.
- Because students will be removing their masks to eat, it is critical to maintain a minimum of 3 feet of distance for PreK to Grade 6; 6 feet of distance for Grade 7 to Grade 12, unless physical barriers are installed.
- Assign seating so students eat with their classmates and do not mingle with other classes. If the building has multiple cafeterias or common areas where students may eat, consider consistently assigning classrooms to one area or the other to reduce interaction between cohorts.
- Seating should be set up so that children are not facing each other.
- If long cafeteria tables with built-in stools are used, children should be seated only on one side of the table, with seats blocked off in between each student to allow for appropriate spacing.
- Individual desks may be a better alternative to tables in the cafeteria, as these will allow for seating to be spaced more appropriately.
- Take steps to ensure physical distancing when students are waiting to receive their meals and at the end of the meal when disposing of compost/trash and returning trays.

This could involve placing markers on the floor and using crowd control stanchions to direct lines.

- Students should not remain in the cafeteria any longer than is necessary for their class/pod/cohort to finish eating. Take steps to prevent students from lingering to socialize.

Meal Service
- Meals should not be self-serve. Staff members can serve students, or pre-portioned items could be provided for students to choose from.
- Salad bars may only be used if items are pre-portioned and packaged, or when an adult is doing all serving and plastic barriers are installed.
- If pin numbers are used, have a staff member enter the pin number on behalf of students.
- Engineering controls such as sneeze guards should be installed in the cafeteria.
- No-touch beverage dispensers may be used; however students should be reminded through signage to use a new cup each time they use the dispenser.
- Consider eliminating beverage dispensers that require buttons to be pressed or having an adult serve the beverages from the dispenser instead. If this is not possible, the buttons should be frequently sanitized between groups of students

Sanitization Measures in the Cafeteria
Because of the additional sanitizing requirements in the cafeteria, administrators should work with food service and janitorial staff to identify who will be responsible for each of these steps. Additional staff members may need to be identified for these tasks if existing food service and janitorial staff do not have time to conduct these sanitization tasks with the necessary frequency.
- Tables, seats and plastic barriers should be cleaned in between each student using that spot.
- Any frequently touched locations in the serving line or at trash stations should be sanitized between each group of students. Refrigerator handles, vending machines, door handles, beverage dispensers are all likely high-touch areas.
- Observe students waiting in line to see whether there are additional high touch locations (walls, railings, etc.).
- Microwaves made available for student use should have their keypads sanitized between groups of students.
- Coffee stations available for adult use should be frequently sanitized.

Staff Training & Education

GISU and its schools will have consistent training throughout. This training will include:

- GISU staff will be educated about general COVID-19 information and encouraged to stay up-to-date on the basics of COVID-19 information for Vermonters at

www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19
- All staff will be trained on building-level safety plans
- Health office staff will be trained in Health Office safety protocols
- All staff must complete the VOSHA training and produce their certificate of completion to the Building Administration to be sent to the Central Office to be filed to personnel files.
- All staff must complete mandatory trainings as assigned related to COVID, cleaning & disinfection, bloodborne pathogens, FERPA, mandated reporting, Act One etc.
- All staff will also undergo training on reducing the stigma per CDC Guidelines
- Substitutes will undergo the same training as all staff members.

Leadership, Policy & Funding

GISU and its member districts abide by federal, state, and collective bargaining contractual leaves.

Guidance to Leaves

As we start to consider how to handle leave requests and returning employees back to work during the COVID Pandemic. We need to consider that the exemptions created by the governor in March of 2020 are no longer active. This means as employees are returning to work and navigating potential leaves, they will need to access the established federal and state leaves. Which includes:
- Paid leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA).
- Job protected leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or VT Parental and Family Leave Law (VPFL) for those who qualify.
- Available and appropriate paid leaves under contract.
- Unpaid leave or other accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act as Amended (ADAA) for those who qualify.
- Vermont's sick leave statute may provide paid time off after FFCRA paid time off has been exhausted.
- Unpaid leave of absence for a specific duration.

What if an employee indicates they cannot return to work because they feel anxious?
- Feeling anxious does NOT qualify an employee to take leave. If an employee indicates they cannot return because they are anxious, it is best practice to refer them to Invest EAP where they may seek assistance from qualified mental health counselors.
- On a case-by-case basis, an employee MAY access leave IF they have documented medical conditions due to anxiety that they are being treated for by a doctor.

When can an employee access the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)?
Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)

FFCRA creates two new emergency leave benefits for eligible employees: (1) emergency paid family and medical leave and (2) emergency paid sick leave. Key provisions of FFCRA that will impact employers and employees are summarized below. These leave benefits are set to expire 12/31/20.

Emergency Family Medical Leave (EFML)
Qualifying Reason for Leave: Employees who are unable to work (or telework) because they need to care for their child whose school is closed, or whose child care provider is unavailable because of COVID-19 or other similar public health emergency.
Eligibility: Available to employees who have been employed a minimum of 30 days
Duration: Up to 12 weeks (running concurrently with FMLA).
Compensation and Benefits:
- The first ten (10) days of EFML is unpaid, but employees may elect to substitute other paid leave benefits during this period (e.g., EPSL leave (below), paid vacation leave).
- After the initial unpaid ten (10) day period, employees shall be paid two-thirds of their regular compensation, up to a maximum of $200 per day or $10,000 in the aggregate.
- The FMLA's job protections apply to EFML.

Certification: Employees requesting EFML may be required to provide acceptable documentation to support the reason for leave. [FORM](#)

Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL)
Qualifying Reason for Leave:
1. The employee is subject to a federal, state, or local quarantine or isolation order due to COVID-19;
2. The employee has been advised by a healthcare provider to self-quarantine because of concerns related to COVID-19;
3. The employee is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and seeking a medical diagnosis;
4. The employee is caring for an individual who is quarantined or advised by a healthcare provider to self-quarantine;
5. The employee is caring for a son or daughter if the school or place of care for the child has been closed, or the child care provider is unavailable, because of COVID-19 precautions;
6. The employee is experiencing any other, substantially similar condition, as specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services in consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of Labor.

Eligibility: All employees for immediate use, regardless of their length of employment
Duration: Up to two weeks (or up to the average number of hours worked over a two-week period). There is no carry-over of leave allowed or payout of unused leave upon separation.
Compensation:
- For reasons 1 - 4 above: Employees shall be paid their regular compensation, up to a maximum of $511 per day.

- For reasons 5 and 6 above: Employees shall be paid either two-thirds of their regular compensation or the minimum wage, whichever amount is greater, up to a maximum of $200 per day.

Certification: Employees requesting EPSL may be required to provide acceptable documentation to support the need for leave. This certification may include, but is not limited to, medical certification, quarantine orders, notice from the childcare provider/school. FORM

How often can an employee access FFCRA?
- ONCE!

What if an employee needs to quarantine due to a choice to travel for a vacation?
- An employee may access FFCRA in order to quarantine because it relates to guidance from the VT Department of Health. They would be able to access FFCRA in addition to their contracted vacation time.

If an employee is sent home sick because of a fever or other symptoms, would that be administrative leave or something else?
- An employee would need to access FFCRA or use their own contracted/accrued sick time.

When can an employee access Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)?
The FMLA entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons with continuation of group health insurance coverage under the same terms and conditions as if the employee had not taken leave.
Qualifying Reason for Leave:
- the birth of a child and to care for the newborn child within one year of birth;
- the placement with the employee of a child for adoption or foster care and to care for the newly placed child within one year of placement;
- to care for the employee's spouse, child, or parent who has a serious health condition;
- a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of his or her job;
- any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent is a covered military member on "covered active duty;"

Eligibility: Employee must have worked worked 1,250 hours during the 12 months prior to the start of leave
Duration: Twelve workweeks of leave in a rolling 12-month period
Compensation: FMLA is an unpaid leave, but an employee may use their available contractual and accrued paid leave time.
Certification: Medical certification may be required for access to FMLA. Request Form Please contact Human Resources for the appropriate certification form based on the reason for the request.

How often can an employee access FMLA?

An employee may access FMLA once in a rolling 12 month period. This means that once they access leave (regardless of time of school year or calendar year), the 12 month period is set. (example: If you access 12 weeks of leave in May of 2020, you cannot request to access FMLA again until May of 2021.)

When can an employee access [VT Parental and Family Leave Law (VPFL)](#)?
An employee who does not qualify for FMLA may qualify for VPFL.
Qualifying Reason for Leave:
- Parental Leave: during the pregnancy and/or after childbirth; or, within a year following the initial placement of a child 16 years of age or younger with the worker for the purpose of adoption;
- Family Leave: for the serious illness of the worker, worker's child, stepchild, ward, foster child, party to a civil union, parent, spouse, or parent of the worker's spouse

Eligibility: A worker who has worked for a covered employer for an average of 30 hours a week for a year is entitled to leave.
Duration: During any 12 month period, the worker is entitled to up to 12 weeks of leave.
Compensation: VPFL is an unpaid leave, but an employee may use their available contractual and accrued paid leave time
Certification: Medical certification may be required for access to VPFL. [Request Form](#) Please contact Human Resources for the appropriate certification form based on the reason for the request.
How often can an employee access VPFL?
An employee may access VPFL once in a rolling 12 month period. This means that once they access leave (regardless of time of school year or calendar year), the 12 month period is set. (example: If you access 12 weeks of leave in May of 2020, you cannot request to access VPFL again until May of 2021.)

When can an employee access their Contractual Leave?
An employee should check their paystub, individual contract, or their collective bargaining agreement to verify their available paid time off.

When can an employee access ADA Leaves and/or accommodations?
ADA leave or accommodation needs to be determined on a case by case basis. The employee should contact Human Resources to ask about qualification and the process associated with the request. An ADA request requires a medical certification.

When can an employee access an unpaid leave of absence?
If an employee has gone through the above options, and depending on the employee's collective bargaining unit, the employee may petition the school board for an unpaid leave of absence. The petition is no guarantee of access.

Return to Work and Paid Leave Q&A
Notice to Employees

Beginning July 1, 2020, ALL employees are expected to work their scheduled work hours.

- What do I do If I am at higher risk?
  - Individuals who are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (as defined by the CDC) are encouraged to speak to their doctor about returning to work. In addition to the leaves outlined above, other special considerations may be available to those at higher risk who are interested in returning to work. These considerations may include, but are not limited to:
    - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as outlined in the COVID-19 Exposure Control Plan if available (e.g., N95 masks, face shields, body protection, protective barriers, gloves) to limit exposure.
    - Remote work may be considered if an employee can efficiently and effectively conduct all the essential functions of their job remotely.
    - Flex time, part-time schedule, compressed work week or other altered work schedule to reduce proximity to others may also be considered.

- I am feeling anxious about returning to work, where can I get help?
  - It is not uncommon for anxiety and stress levels to increase during the pandemic and spike when schools reopen and people are in contact with potential COVID carriers. If you have a chronic condition or suffer from anxiety, you are encouraged to talk to your healthcare provider.

  - You are also encouraged to contact Invest EAP for free counseling services and other resources to help you through this pandemic. EAP provides all employees and their family members with confidential, short-term counseling, assessment, and resource and referral information on a variety of life and work issues. The contact information for Invest EAP is found below:

    Toll Free 1-800-287-2173
    www.investeap.org
    Password: vsbit

- What if I have more than one qualifying event under FFCRA (e.g., I need to quarantine for 14 days, then later experience symptoms of COVID-19)?
  - Paid leave under FFCRA is a total of up to two weeks combined for all qualifying events. However, employees may access their available and appropriate paid leaves under contract for any additional time needed with acceptable medical certification. Unpaid leave may also be considered.

- Can I take leave under FFCRA intermittently if my child's school or childcare provider closes for short periods of time throughout the 2020-2021 school year?

- ○ FFCRA can be used intermittently through 12/31/20 (unless otherwise extended by the federal government). This means if your child's school or childcare provider is closed temporarily (or only open for a partial day) as a result of the health pandemic, FFCRA can be accessed for the period of time in which the school or childcare provider is closed through 12/30/20.

- Once FFCRA leaves are exhausted, can I access my available paid leaves under contract?
    - ○ Once available FFCRA are exhausted, employees may access their available paid leaves under their contract for the qualifying reasons as outlined below:
        1. For reason 1 - 3 as outlined in FFCRA, employees may be able to access their available vacation, personal, floating holidays or sick leave with acceptable medical certification.
        2. For reason 4 - 6 as outlined in FFCRA, employees may be able to access their available vacation, personal, floating holidays or family leave with acceptable certification. Sick leave cannot be accessed for these reasons.
        3. Employees may also be entitled to use accrued sick time after FFCRA time is exhausted where children are not in school or in child care because of COVID-19.

- If I exhaust my available FFCRA leaves and my available and appropriate paid leaves under contract and still need additional leave, what are my options?
    - ○ Depending on the circumstance, unpaid leave may be considered. Extended periods of unpaid leave may result in the loss of health and other insurances under the District's group plan. In this event, employees will be given the right to continue their health insurance coverage at their own expense under COBRA for up to 18 months.

- If I access leave under FFCRA, will this leave count against my annual 12 weeks of FMLA leave should I have a different FMLA qualifying event?
    - ○ Any leave taken under FFCRA shall be counted as FMLA leave for those who qualify. This means that if you use leave under FFCRA, the leave you have available under FMLA during the same 12-month period will be reduced by the amount of leave taken if you have another qualifying event (e.g., birth/adoption of a child, serious health condition of yourself or a covered family member).

- What do I do if I come down with COVID-19 symptoms?
    - ○ **You must not come to work if you are experiencing any of these symptoms: cough, fever, shortness of breath, chills, fatigue, muscle pain or body aches, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.**

- ○ Please be sure to contact your healthcare provider, report your absences to your supervisor, and contact Human Resources to determine appropriate leave use and other requirements.
  - ○ You'll also need to follow the VT Department of Health self-isolation requirements as outlined [here](#).

- What should I do if you come into close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19?
  - ○ Please be sure to follow the [VT Department of Health Guidance](#), which requires self quarantine for 14 days, or self quarantine for 7 days followed by a negative COVID-19 test result. Paid leave may be available under FFCRA to cover the quarantine period. If you have exhausted your leave under FFCRA, you may be able to access available and appropriate leaves under your contract.

- What if I come into close contact with someone who is diagnosed with COVID-19 at work and have to quarantine? Will I still be paid?
  - ○ If you come into close contact with someone who is diagnosed with COVID-19 during the performance of your work duties and you are required to quarantine, you may be assigned remote work duties during the period of quarantine. In order to be paid, you must complete the assigned remote work during this quarantine period or utilize available contracted/accrued paid leave.

- What if I am approved for leave (paid or unpaid) and the District switches to remote instruction? Can I alter my leave request to work remotely?
  - ○ No, once you have been approved for leave, whether paid or unpaid, you must continue your leave through the approved duration regardless of the phase of instruction we are in.

- I was diagnosed with COVID-19 and believe I may have contracted it at work. What should I do?
  - ○ If you are diagnosed with COVID-19 and believe you contracted it at work, please report this to your supervisor so a First Report of Injury can be completed and submitted to our workers compensation carrier. The District and/or their insurance carrier will make reasonable efforts to conduct an investigation into the claim. These reasonable efforts may include:
    - § Asking you questions about how you think your COVID-19 was contracted and why you think that.
    - § Making inquiries about your work and nonwork activities, and possible exposure, leading up to the diagnosis.
    - § Investigating your work environment to determine whether COVID-19 exposure was possible. This might include considering whether other employees in the work area have tested positive, your job duties and

exposure to the public, and whether the work areas are crowded and do not facilitate social distancing.

- What if I have an underlying health condition and that condition is listed as putting me at an increased risk related to COVID?
    - You do not automatically qualify for the leave based on having an underlying health condition. You should consult your provider to have the provider assess if you are safe to return to work.
        - Flow chart of "options" to consider:
            - FMLA - If you do not qualify for FMLA, then what?
                - VPFL - Likely you would not qualify if you did not qualify for FMLA, then what?
                    - ADA Leave and/or accommodation - if you do not qualify for ADA?
                        - Consider what your CBA indicates in the leave section. Some will allow you to petition the Board for a leave for health reasons. This may be an unpaid leave, depending on the bargaining unit.

Worker's compensation is available to employees who contract COVID on the job through S-0342. If an employee believes they have contracted COVID while at work, they should submit a first report of injury form to Human Resources.

Financial Guidance

The GISU and its member districts will follow the guidance contained in the [Federal Education Funding Planning Guidance](#).

COVID expenses, inclusive of FFCRA leave expenses are tracked separately within the GISU and its member districts. The function code established for tracking is 1900-5610.

GISU Communications

Schools should have clear, consistent and regular communication with staff, students, families and community members during this time, including changes to policies and operations, such as health screenings, drop-off/pick-up, classroom arrangements, etc. Communications should include:

- Post signs on how to stop the spread of COVID-19, properly wash hands, promote everyday protective measures and properly wear a face covering in visible areas for students and staff to view.

- Employee handbooks and student handbooks should include information on how to recognize the signs of infection and directives not to come to school if sick.
- Basic information on COVID-19 and measures families can take to stay safe when not at school.
- Clear direction in student handbooks on when to keep a student home and the process for notifying the school.
- Communicate your expectations for modeling respiratory etiquette, physical distancing, wearing facial coverings, refraining from touching their face, staying home when sick and supporting employees who need to take care of sick family members.
- The importance of mandatory immunizations and locations where they can be obtained, as well as the importance of flu vaccinations.
- Information on trauma-informed practices and helping students cope with stress and tragedies (see section on social emotional health).
- Availability of community resources, including:
    - Mental health resources
    - Food security
    - Medical/dental providers
    - Health insurance
    - Economic aid
    - Housing assistance
- Prepare communications to the public sharing the practices that the school is implementing to keep staff, students and community members healthy.
- Identify a school nurse leader for the SU/SD or independent school who is or works closely with the COVID-19 Coordinator. That nurse can develop consistent health forms for enrollment, illness, COVID-19 notices and return to school consistent across all schools in the SU/SD or independent school. (The GISU has designated District Nurse, Emily Dousevicz as the COVID Coordinator).
- Use all communication channels available to you, including direct communications (face-to-face, letters), electronic communications (your program's or school's website or social media pages), and remote parent meetings to share updates.
- Ensure all communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate as well as accessible for individuals with disabilities.
- Intentionally and persistently combat stigma. Misinformation about coronavirus and COVID-19 can create fear and hostility that hurts people and makes it harder to keep everyone healthy. We are stronger as a community when we stand together against discrimination. Take advantage of these resources from the CDC to prevent, interrupt and respond to stigma.

Policy/Procedure Updates

The GISU and its member districts have updated policies and procedures to respond to COVID 19 as related to the [Guidance](). This includes:

GISU Hybrid Instructional Model During COVID 19
Policy

The Grand Isle Supervisory Union (GISU) is always committed to supporting the academic and social needs of all of our students and ensuring they make progress. At all times safeguarding our students' health, welfare, and nutrition is a priority and through this Pandemic, we are emphasizing its importance.

The superintendent will be responsible for following and implementing the Vermont Agency of Education and the Vermont Department of Health guidance, formal rules, and procedures for implementing hybrid learning.

Like in-person instruction, hybrid, and remote learning should be implemented as part of a coherent instructional systems design relative to current education quality regulations which require each District and building within the GISU to have the following systems in place:
- An Educational Support System
- A Local Assessment Plan
- A Coordinated Curriculum among all its schools
- A Needs-based Professional Development System

Responsibilities of the Superintendent

- Determine the grade levels that will receive in-person instruction and the frequency of that instruction.
- Ensure instructional emphasis is placed on GISU's essential standards and social and emotional learning.
- Provide a process for parents to sign up and discontinue participation in hybrid learning, along with providing a fully remote option for families.
- Set consistent and clear expectations for attendance throughout the district.
- Set expectations for the completion of student work and achievement of academic milestones, proficiencies, and other benchmarks.
- Provide a description of the hybrid learning experiences that will be synchronous to comparable in-person instructional activities.
- The provision for educational supports including teacher-student check-ins and other supports provided under the district's regular EST process.
- Provide how special education services and related services will be provided.
- Guarantee Child Nutrition will provide meals during remote/in-person instruction.
- Making sure students have opportunities to participate in in-person activities such as clubs, sports, and music ensembles while following the updated health and safety guidance.

The Superintendent will work with Grand Isle Supervisory Union Educational Association in addressing the working condition considerations relative to implementing hybrid learning.

The GISU and its member districts will also consider the [State Board Rules re:length of day](#) when planning for students and hybrid scheduling.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES AND STUDENTS

I.   Statement of Policy

The Grand Isle Supervisory Union and its member districts recognize electronic communications and the use of social media outlets create new options for extending and enhancing the educational program of the school district. Electronic communications and the use of social media can help students and employees communicate regarding: questions during non-school hours regarding homework or other assignments; scheduling issues for school-related co-curricular and interscholastic athletic activities; school work to be completed during a student's extended absence; distance learning opportunities; and other professional communications that can enhance teaching and learning opportunities between employees and students. However, the Grand Isle Supervisory Union and its member districts recognize employees and students can be vulnerable in electronic communications.

In accordance with Act 5 of 2018 this model policy is adopted to provide guidance and direction to the Grand Isle Supervisory Union and its member district employees to prevent improper electronic communications between employees and students.

II.   Definitions. For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

A. **Electronic communication**. Electronic communication is any computer-mediated communication in which individuals exchange messages with others, either individually or in groups. Examples of electronic communication include, but are not limited to, email, text messages, instant messaging, voicemail, and image sharing and communications made by means of an internet site, including social media and social networking websites.

B. **Social media**. Social media is any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication, including, but not limited to, social networks, blogs, websites and internet forums. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Google+.

C. **Employee**. Employee includes any person employed directly by or retained through a contract of employment the district, an agent of the school, a school board member, and including supervisory union employees.

D. **Student.** Student means any person who attends school in any of the grades Prekindergarten through 12 operated by the district.

III. Policy on Electronic Communication Between Students and Employees.

All communication between employees and students shall be professional and appropriate. The use of electronic communication that is inappropriate in content is

prohibited.

A. Inappropriate content of an electronic communication. Inappropriate content of an electronic communication between an Employee and a Student includes, but is not limited to:

1.   Communications of a sexual nature, sexual oriented humor or language, sexual advances, or content with a sexual overtone;

2.   Communications involving the use, encouraging the use, or promoting or advocating the use of alcohol or tobacco, the illegal use of prescription drugs or controlled dangerous substances, illegal gambling, or other illegal activities;

3.   Communications regarding the employees' or student's past or current romantic relationships;

4.   Communications which include the use of profanities, obscene language, lewd comments, or pornography;

5.   Communications that are harassing, intimidating, or demeaning;

6.   Communications requesting or trying to establish a personal relationship with a student beyond the employees' professional responsibilities;

7.   Communications related to personal or confidential information regarding employee or student that isn't academically focused; and

8.   Communications between an employee and a student between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. An Employee may, however, make public posts to a social network site, blog or similar application at any time.

B. Procedures. The superintendent shall develop procedures for both the receipt and handling of reports filed under this policy (see IV.A. and B. below).

IV.   Enforcement Responsibilities

A.   **Student communications violation of this policy.** In the event a student sends an electronic communication, that is inappropriate as defined in this policy or that violates the procedures governing inappropriate forms of electronic communication to an employee, the employee shall submit a written report of the inappropriate communication ("Report") to the principal or designee by the end of the next school day following actual receipt by the Employee of such communication. The principal or designee will take appropriate action to have the student discontinue such improper electronic communications.

While the school district will seek to use such improper electronic communications by a student as a teaching and learning opportunity, student communications violation of this policy may subject a student to discipline. Any discipline imposed shall take into

account the relevant surrounding facts and circumstances.

B. **Employee communications violation of this policy.** In the event an employee sends an electronic communication that is inappropriate as defined in this policy or that violates the procedures governing inappropriate forms of electronic communication to a student, the student shall or the student's parent or guardian may submit a written report of the inappropriate communication ("Report") to the principal and/or the person designated by the principal to receive complaints under this policy promptly. The report shall specify what type of inappropriate communication was sent by the employee with a copy of the communication, if possible.

Inappropriate electronic communications by an employee may result in appropriate disciplinary action.

C. **Applicability.** The provisions of this policy shall be applicable at all times while the employee is employed by the district and at all times the student is enrolled in the school district, including holiday and summer breaks. An employee is not subject to these provisions to the extent the employee has a family relationship with a student (i.e. parent/child, nieces, nephews, grandchildren, etc.).

D. **Other district policies.** Improper electronic communications that may also constitute violations of other policies of the district, i.e. unwelcome sexual conduct may also constitute a violation of the school's separate policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students. Complaints regarding such behavior should be directed as set forth in the school's Procedures on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students.

V.   Reporting to Other Agencies

A.   **Reports to Department of Children and Families [DCF]**. When behaviors violative of this policy include allegations of child abuse, any person responsible for reporting suspected child abuse under 33 V.S.A. §4911, et seq., must report the allegations to the Commissioner of DCF. If the victim is over the age of 18 and a report of abuse is warranted, the report shall be made to Adult Protective Services in accordance with 33 V.S.A. §6901 et seq.

B.   **Reports to Vermont Agency of Education [AOE]**. Accordingly, if behaviors violative of this policy in a public school involve conduct by a licensed educator that might be grounds under Vermont law for licensing action, the principal shall report the alleged conduct to the superintendent and the superintendent shall report the alleged conduct to the AOE.

C. **Reporting Incidents to the Police**. Nothing in this policy shall preclude persons from reporting to law enforcement any incidents and/or conduct that may be a criminal act.

D. **Continuing Obligation to Investigate**. Reports made to either DCF or law enforcement shall not be considered to absolve the school administrators of their

obligations under this or any other policy, such as the Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying, to pursue and complete an investigation upon receipt of notice of conduct which may constitute a policy violation.

Appendix (inclusive of signage)

Links to Signs/Posters (signs that can be printed and laminated)

General signage and information:

> COVID communication toolkits from CDC:
> https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/toolkits/index.html

> Free COVID signs: https://www.signs.com/coronavirus-signage/

Drop-Off and Pick-up / Arrival and Departure (pg 11) - Signs must be posted at all entrances clearly indicating that no one may enter if they have symptoms of respiratory illness or fever.

> Visitor Poster:
> https://www.health.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0041/949379/COVID19-visitor-poster.pdf
> Stay Home if Sick Poster:
> https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/StayHomeFromWork.pdf
> Please read before entering:
> https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/Please-Read.pdf

> General Signs (including directional signs):
> https://plumgroveinc.com/products/marketing/free-covid-19-coronavirus-sign-poster-templates/

Hand Hygiene (pg12) - Place posters describing handwashing steps near sinks. Developmentally appropriate posters in multiple languages are available from CDC.
> Handwashing Posters from the CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html

> Create your own handwashing poster based on popular songs at Wash Your Lyrics:
> https://washyourlyrics.com/

Communal Spaces, Large Group Activities and Public Use of Schools (pg 15-16) - Signs should be posted [on school grounds] about wearing facial coverings and physical distancing.

> Wear a mask and maintain distancing poster:
> https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/cloth-face-covering-building-entrance.pdf
> Social distancing posters from Canada:
> https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/respect-distancing-poster-eng.pdf &
> https://www.poucecoupe.ca/content/physical-distancing-poster-covid-19
> AOE Outdoor Recreation Poster:
> https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/outdoor-recreation-and-covid-19

Volunteers, Visitors, Field Trips (pg 16) - Post maximum occupancy numbers on doors.

> AOE Reopening Posters (includes a maximum occupancy sign):
> https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/business/restart/signage

Building Considerations/Modifications (pg 17) - Prior to the restart of schools, all buildings must secure two separate areas (Clean and Isolation) to serve the school population… Add signage to clearly mark all closed areas.

> General Signs including area closed signs:
> https://plumgroveinc.com/products/marketing/free-covid-19-coronavirus-sign-poster-templates/
> Isolation signage (free download):
> https://www.vecteezy.com/vector-art/1078201-caution-isolation-area-sign-set
> Self-isolation signage (royalty free download):
> https://www.dreamstime.com/high-resolution-vector-illustration-s-warning-danger-sign-words-covid-self-isolation-area-white-background-image177776444

Do it for yourself and your friends (HS level):

> https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/Young-Mitigation-recommendations-resources-toolkit-HS.pdf
> Cover your Cough:
> https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/cover-your-cough_poster.pdf &
> https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/protect/cdc_cough.pdf
> Face Masks Dos and Don'ts:
> https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/hcp/fs-facemask-dos-donts.pdf
> Symptoms of COVID:
> https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID19-symptoms-11x17-en.pdf
> Stop the spread of germs:
> https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/stop-the-spread-of-germs-11x17-en.pdf
> 10 things to do to manage COVID symptoms at home:
> https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/10Things.pdf

For employees (how to use PPE equipment):

> How to Take Respiratory On and Off:
> https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/hcp/fs-respirator-on-off.pdf
> Use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) When Caring for Patients with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 flyer:
> https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/A_FS_HCP_COVID19_PPE.pdf
> Use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) When Caring for Patients with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 poster:
> https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/A_FS_HCP_COVID19_PPE_11

[x17.pdf](x17.pdf)
COVID-19 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Healthcare Personnel (poster/picture only):
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID-19_PPE_illustrations-p.pdf
Social distancing:
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/COVID19-keep-space-summer-camp-poster.pdf

Building Cleaning & Disinfecting

Classroom Signage

Resources:

Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility: Everyday Steps, Steps When Someone is Sick, and Considerations for Employers, CDC Covid-10 Guidelines (April, 2020)
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fdisinfecting-building-facility.html

Cleaning FAQs, CDC Covid-19 Guidelines (July 2020)
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#Cleaning-and-Disinfection

Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting: Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes, CDC Covid-19 Guidelines (May, 2020)
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/cleaning-disinfecting-decision-tool.html

Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes, CDC Covid-19 Guidelines (May, 2020)
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html

Six Steps for Safe & Effective Disinfectant Use, EPA (April, 2020)
https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-04/documents/disinfectants-onepager.pdf

Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of Covid-19, CDC (June, 2020)
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html

Social/Emotional Resources

Community resources:

Northwestern Counseling and Support Services: https://www.ncssinc.org/ or 524-6554
Howard Substance Abuse Program: https://howardcenter.org/ or 524-7265
EAP- Employee Assistance Program: www.investeap.org or 800-287-2173
211 Resources : https://www.vermont211.org/
Megan Devinny: mdevinny@gisu.org or 372-6921 ext. 2002
Grand Isle Sheriff's Department: 372-4482
VT State Police: 524-5993

Other resources:
Educator Resilience and Trauma Informed Self Care Video
Managing Anxiety Around Covid 19
Helping Children Cope with Changes Result from Covid 19 - National Association of School Psychologist