

Q & A - Safety Guidelines for Students and Staff

Interactive Table of Contents

Q & A - Safety Guidelines for Students and Staff	2
Suggestions related to information for planning and implementing safety guidelines	2
Transportation	2
Screening and monitoring for health	3
Cleaning and Disinfecting	3
Inventory the items in your classroom and develop a cleaning plan.	3
Remove some toys and items	3
Store and use some toys	3
Determine what needs to be cleaned	4
Clean and Disinfect Bedding	4
Clean and Sanitize Classroom Furniture	4
Implementing Safety and Distancing Guidelines	5
Collaborating and Communicating with Families	5
Items from Home and Transportation	5
Food and Eating	6
Making use of Outdoor Space	6
Staff Collaboration and Planning with Service Providers	7

Q & A - Safety Guidelines for Students and Staff

What are suggestions related to information for planning and implementing safety guidelines?

Teachers and staff in Pre-K programs will need to not only be familiar with district and school guidelines but should work to teach and implement these guidelines consistently. Staff should collaborate frequently and monitor the young students in the program to ensure their safety and facilitate their participation. Implementation of several coordinated interventions will be required to consistently address safety and health of students:

- Provision of information, training, and collaboration of all staff
- Identify priority needs for planning staff roles and responsibilities
 - Hygiene
 - Distancing (students and adults)
 - Screening for health concerns (based on district guidelines)
- Development of classroom plans for teaching and implementing guidelines
 - Personal hygiene emphasizing handwashing
 - Cleaning and sanitizing classroom furniture and materials
 - Monitoring and Grouping students for social distancing
 - Schedules and routines
 - Meals and snacks
 - Utilizing outdoor spaces
- Development of plans based on individual needs
 - Assistance with self-care skills
 - Embedding lessons
 - Consistent communication with families

Transportation

Teachers and paraprofessionals should be aware of the guidelines for students who are transported to school on the bus. Paraprofessionals are often required to ride buses with Pre-K, as well as with students with disabilities. Although they will have likely received training related to their duties when assisting students who are riding the bus, teachers should be aware of their roles and responsibilities and schedule morning entry routines based on the timeframe that paraprofessionals who assist students on buses arrive in the classroom.

Teachers can also support students who are transported by school bus by reinforcing bus guidelines with visuals, social narrative, and reminders. Collaborate with paraprofessionals, drivers, and families to develop supports for students who have difficulties following guidelines.

Teachers and paraprofessionals should be aware of the guidelines for arrival and dismissal for students who are transported by their families. Many districts' plans include a process of family drivers waiting in the car with their student until an assigned staff member arrives to pick up the students and assist them in going to their classrooms. As with students who ride the bus, teachers can support students with visuals and social narratives related to the vehicle-arrival procedures.

Screening and monitoring for health

Follow district guidelines for screening students upon arrival. It is recommended as a best practice to take students' temperature each morning only if the school uses a no-touch thermometer. The no touch thermometer needs to be wiped with an alcohol wipe after each use. Thermometers must be properly cleaned and disinfected after each use.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Given the challenges that may exist in students in effectively adhering to recommendations, it is critical staff are setting a good example for students by modeling behaviors around physical distancing, face coverings and hand hygiene.

What guidelines for Cleaning and Disinfection should be noted?

Clean, sanitize, and disinfect throughout the day. Follow district guidance but increase how often you clean if required due to the young ages, developmental levels, and disabilities of your students.

Clarification of Terms:

- *Cleaning* removes germs, dirt, food, body fluids, and other material. Cleaning increases the benefit of sanitizing or disinfecting.
- *Sanitizing* reduces germs on surfaces to levels that are safe.
- *Disinfecting* kills germs on surfaces of a clean object.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates sanitizer and disinfectant chemicals. If you sanitize or disinfect without cleaning first, it will reduce how well these chemicals work and may leave more germs on the surface. Refer to district guidelines for specifics related to approved products.

Inventory the items in your classroom and develop a cleaning plan.

Remove toys and items that are shared and that are difficult to disinfect (doll clothes, cloth dolls).

- Some items cannot be cleaned and sanitized. This includes things like playdough and sensory or water tables, stuffed animals, and dress up clothes. These items should be removed from the program unless they are individually assigned and labeled.
- Rotate toys that are out at any one time, so they can be cleaned and sanitized.
- Books and other paper-based materials are not high risk for spreading the virus. However, Pre-K students, especially those with delays and disabilities might tend to put books in their mouths. Keep some board books in bins and monitor for the need to clean and sterilize. If possible, designate specific bins of books for students while continuing to provide them opportunities for choices and access to their favorites.

Store and use toys in a way that provides access to an adequate number and variety to meet classroom needs for engagement and participation; but use them in a manner that does not require cleaning every toy each day.

- Store toys in bins or large bags when possible so that toys that are not used will not have to be disinfected.

- Put only some of your classroom toys, games, puzzles, and manipulative items out at one time. Switch out these items daily so that only one set needs to be cleaned while leaving a second set for students to use the next rotation.

Determine what needs to be cleaned and how often. Determine what items need to be disinfected. Develop and schedule for cleaning and disinfecting.

- Toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized should not be used.
- Toys and books that students have placed in their mouths or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretions or excretions should be set aside.
 - They should be cleaned by hand by a person wearing gloves.
 - Follow district guidelines, including cleaning with water and detergent, rinsing, and then sanitizing with disinfectant, rinsing again, and air-drying.
 - You may also clean in a mechanical dishwasher.
 - Be mindful and monitor consistently when students are using items that are more likely to be placed in their mouths, like play food, dishes, and utensils.
- 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 generally an accepted method but refer to district guidelines.
 - Try to have enough toys so that the toys can be rotated through cleanings.

Resource: [Sample Routine Schedule for Cleaning and Sanitizing](#) (editable)

Clean and Disinfect Bedding

Cots, mats, and bedding should be labeled for each student. Use bedding that can be washed. Keep each student’s bedding separate, and consider storing in individually labeled bins, cubbies, or bags. Bedding that touches a student’s skin should be cleaned weekly or before use by another student.

If possible, at nap time, ensure that students’ naptime mats or cots are spaced out as much as possible, ideally 6 feet apart. Consider placing students head to toe in order to further reduce the potential for viral spread.

Clean and Sanitize Classroom Furniture

Refer to district guidelines for soaps and disinfectants that are acceptable for use and for how often surfaces should be cleaned. Some areas of your classroom and some furniture might require more frequent cleaning than required.

- Any surfaces or items that come into contact with a student’s mouth or have body fluids left on them should be cleaned and disinfected immediately. These items should be left unused until dry.
- Bathrooms and toilets should be cleaned and disinfected daily (refer to district guidelines) but it is important to monitor bathrooms, toilets, and sinks in order to clean bodily fluids quickly between use by students.

- Although toilet training is an important part of self-care skills, refer to district guidelines regarding the use of potty chairs during school reopening. If potty chairs or toilet inserts are used, they should be cleaned and disinfected between uses. If feasible assign potty chairs and inserts to students individually if it is within your district guidelines to use them. Note: Refer to your district's guidelines and communicate with families regarding the use of potty chairs and toilet inserts. Document information shared with families.
- Non-carpeted floors should be cleaned daily and carpeted floors should be vacuumed daily. If bodily fluids or excessive soil is on a carpet, it might require shampooing or cleaning.

Implementing Safety and Distancing Guidelines

Collaborating and Communicating with Families

You are a trusted voice for the families you serve. Talk to families about the importance of the school and district guidelines. Families should be informed prior to the beginning of school about daily temperature checks and the protocol for notifying them if their children exhibited fevers or symptoms. Explain the process for notifications and actions in the case that a staff member exhibit symptoms or test positive for COVID-19. It is important to keep them informed and provide reminders if needed related to the district guidelines. Document contacts and conferences with families in order to record their concerns and questions, as well as record your responses to them.

Refer to district guidelines and communicate with family members regarding how they should tell you about possible or confirmed cases of COVID-19. Families should report possible illness if anyone in their household shows symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19.

Items from Home and Transportation

- Limit the number of items brought into the classroom because this can be a way to transmit the virus. Ask families to avoid sending toys such as stuffed animals because of the difficulty in cleaning.
- Emphasize the importance of the family providing a change of clothes for each student.
- Ensure that family members are aware of district guidelines for sending lunches and snacks to school.
- Ensure that family members are aware of district guidelines related to drop-off, pick-up procedures and schedules, as well as being aware of rule for the bus. Provide appropriate contact information if they have questions.
- Let families know times of the day when you are most likely to be available to talk with them. Provide email or school communication programs' information so that they are able to send questions and concerns. Explain to family members that your time is limited during the day because of increased needs for cleaning and monitoring students for safety and health precautions. Document your contacts and conferences with families.

Food and Eating

Refer to district guidelines for specific information related to how breakfast and lunch will be served at your school.

- Pre-K students often require assistance during mealtimes (i.e. opening containers, self-feeding). Classroom staff should wear gloves when handling food.
- Maintain distancing and grouping during meals.
- Clean tables before and after meals.
- Use outdoor spaces for meals if possible. Consider having one group outside and one in the room if possible. Rotate groups daily or weekly so that each group gets a turn to eat outdoors.
- Students and staff should wash hands before and after eating.
- Consider the use of disposable plates and meal supplies if items can't be properly washed, rinsed, and sanitized.
- Serve students their snacks and meals and ensure that they are not sharing food with each other.
- Cleaning up individual eating areas can be done by each student based on their abilities to do so. Social distancing should be maintained by having them go one at a time to dispose of their trash.
- Use touchless trashcans (foot pedal to open) and emphasize to students that they should not touch the trashcan.

Making use of Outdoor Space

Extend the indoor environment to outdoors, and take the class outside, weather permitting.

- Emphasis should be placed on grouping students and limiting the size of groups participating in playground time.
- Outdoor playgrounds/natural play areas only need routine maintenance, and hand hygiene should be emphasized before and after use of these spaces.
- Outdoor play equipment with high-touch surfaces (i.e. railings, handles) should be cleaned and disinfected regularly if used continuously and according to district guidelines.

Offer outdoor play in staggered shifts or separated into groups to play in various sections of the outside area.

- If two or more groups are outside at the same time, they should have at least 6 feet of open space between them.
- Use cones, flags, tape, or other signs to create boundaries between groups.
- If you can, have equipment (i.e. balls, hoops) for each student in the play group not using the playground equipment. Clean outside toys regularly. Always wash hands right after outdoor play time.
- Bubbles are often a good activity for outdoor play. A useful strategy is to assign bubbles per student, label, and store each student's separately.

Lessons and activities can be moved from the classroom to an outside area. Coordinate with school staff to ensure that the limit for number of students is not exceeded.

- If possible take small groups to an outside area for story time or for guided play activities. This is a good strategy for having a smaller group inside the classroom for distancing, as well as for specific activities.
- Handwashing and cleaning materials should be according to district guidelines and practiced consistently just as they are inside.
- Refer to district guidelines related to topical sunscreen. Communicate these guidelines to family members. At the same time, monitor the amount of sun and heat to avoid over-exposure. Ensure that students have ample drinking water.

Staff Collaboration and Planning with Service Providers

Keep small groups consistent. The staff and students in each activity group should remain the same from day to day to reduce contact, as well as to build feelings of community and help students become familiar with routines.

It is best if the staff to student ratio allows for one staff member to take a break without having to bring another individual into the small group space. If that is not possible and a float person is brought into the room, these practices should be followed:

- Any adult who is not a normal part of the group should wash hands immediately upon entering and upon leaving the space.
- Any person providing breaks who is not a normal part of the group should wear PPE according to district guidelines when they are in the classroom.
- Consider timing when bringing in adults who are not normally part of a group to minimize close interactions with students.
 - For example, give staff their lunch break during students' nap time so the float staff can remain 6 feet away from the students while they rest; or
 - Plan 10-minute breaks when the students have just started a new, engaging activity that does not require much adult interaction; or
 - Plan breaks when the group is having outside time where the risk of transmission is lower.

Collaborate with therapists to develop plans related to the number of people allowed in classrooms. Review IEP's in order to determine opportune ways to use sections of the classroom and group students in ways that facilitate delivery of their therapy and related services. Be sure to note on the classroom schedule the times when therapists will be working with specific students so that an area in the classroom is available.