

PLANNING, POLICY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
AUGUST 24, 2020

SUBJECT

Public Education – Fall Reopening Update

REFERENCE

March 23, 2020	Idaho State Board of Education (Board) approved a soft closure of all public schools in Idaho through April 20, 2020.
April 6, 2020	Board extended the public school soft closure through the remainder of the academic school year with the option of an earlier entry under certain criteria. Additional action included recommendations to the Governor on statutory provision suspensions, and waiver of the number of hours of instruction that make up a semester credit.
April 16, 2020	Board approved re-entry criteria following the soft closure of schools due to the coronavirus pandemic.
May 4, 2020	Board approved minimum requirements for school districts and charter school to bring students back on campus after the soft closure.
July 9, 2020	Board approved Idaho's back to school framework.
August 17, 2020	Board received update on status of the public education system's (K-20) school/institution reopening status.

APPLICABLE STATUTE, RULE, OR POLICY

Sections 33-101, 33-116, and 33-512, Idaho Code

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

At the August 17, 2020 Special Board meeting the Board received an update from representative of the superintendents from each of Idaho's six education regions. At the August 24, 2020 Special Board meeting the reopening update and discussion will focus on Idaho's public charters schools and a discussion around the collaboration with the Idaho Digital Learning Academy and school districts around the state to provide online course options to supplement the schools programs.

Of Idaho's 67 authorized public charter schools the Public Charter School Commission (Commission) authorizes 57 of them, including Idaho's eight virtual charter schools. The Commission was established by the Idaho Legislature in 2004 as an alternative authorizer for public charter schools and is housed in the Office of the State Board of Education. In addition to serving as an independent authorizer for public charter schools the Commission is also responsible for making recommendation to the Board regarding the oversight of public charter schools in Idaho. The remaining public charter schools are authorized through a school district.

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Each public charter school operates under a contractual agreement known as a performance certificate. This agreement details items such as the number of students a school may serve, the grade levels a school may serve, and the key design elements that define each school's unique instructional model. Under this agreement, schools have the autonomy to make decisions at the building level but also have the responsibility to maintain legal compliance and meet certain performance outcomes.

The charter school experience with COVID-19 response has some unique strengths and challenges. Because the level of autonomy granted by Board in this situation is a structure charter schools work within on a regular basis, charters were able to pivot fairly quickly. Charter school experience with building-level autonomy has been a strength. However, as smaller organizations, fewer people carry the load, and rapid increases have resulted on people being stretched very thin. It has also been a challenge for each charter school to find ways to deliver its unique model in a way that also meets safety guidelines. This is particularly true of models that are more collaborative in nature, such as Waldorf and Montessori schools.

In the bigger picture, charter schools are facing the same challenges as other schools: shortages of bus drivers and substitutes, devices on backorder, and debates over masks, to name a few. Each school authorized by the Commission has developed a re-opening plan, and the Commission staff has reviewed each and at this time has identified no compliance violations or significant concerns. The Commission continues to encourage schools to adhere to the guidance provided by the Board and the CDC as they navigate reopening.

A few representatives of the charter school sector have been asked to share thoughts on their re-opening experience from a charter school perspective with a goal of helping the Board to identify its next steps in supporting all public education institutions through this difficult time. Speakers include:

- Alan Reed, Chairman of the Idaho Public Charter School Commission
- Jenn Thompson, Director of the Idaho Public Charter School Commission
- Gayle O'Donahue, Federal Programs and Special Projects Coordinator for Liberty, Legacy, and Victory Charter Schools
- Katie Allison, Executive Director of iSucceed Virtual School

Liberty, Legacy, and Victory Charter Schools reopened on August 10,, 2020. They are located in Nampa, serve grades K-12, and offer a locally developed and historically high performing instructional model called the Harbor Method. Additionally, they operate a robust athletic program at the secondary level. These school collectively served 1,060 students in FY20 and have projected their FY21 enrollment at 1,100.

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iSucceed reopened on August 17, 2020. This school offers both a traditional virtual model and an alternative program specific to at-risk students. This school has projected FY21 enrollment at 686 students, an anticipated growth of 100 students over the previous year.

The Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA) provides virtual and hybrid courses to students through their local/home school. Student's participating in IDLA courses are counted as being enrolled at their home school. In response to the Coronavirus pandemic IDLA has increased their level and scope of support to Idaho public schools. While IDLA's response has been rapid, the recent need has stretched IDLA's resources and ability to serve all schools and all students in the recent weeks. IDLA will provide the Board with an update of their current supports to schools and how the added need is being managed. Like school districts and charter schools, IDLA also faces the challenge of trying to hire and train teachers to teach students in an online environment quick enough to meet the demand.

IMPACT

The purpose of the discussion is to help keep the Board informed about what is happening around the state as the public education system moves into the fall academic term and whether or not the system is meeting the stat

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Summary of School District and Charter School Re-opening Plans (as of the week of August 17, 2020)
- Attachment 2 – Transmission Level Category

STAFF COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Local education agencies are responsible for providing instruction and other related educational services to all students during these difficult times, and they will need to use a variety of strategies to ensure all students have access to consistent learning opportunities, including students receiving special education services. In order to meet this responsibility, it is anticipated schools will need to use a blended learning approach to education as schools move up or down through the categories of community transmission or confirmed cases are identified within a school building. To meet these responsibilities, school districts and public charter schools are in the process of planning or implementing and adjusting plans that help them to meet their responsibilities for providing instruction to all students during the 2020-2021 academic year in a safe and healthy learning environment and a safe work environment for staff. Parents and guardians can expect their local public schools to provide a quality education that meets the state's minimum standards and prepares the students for their next level of education or to move into the workforce.

As the situations in a given community rapidly changes, schools are updating their plans to meet those changing conditions. The information provided today is based on the compilation of school district and charter school plans that have been

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compiled by Board and the Governor's Office staff. While every effort is being made to keep this information updated, there may be some instances where a local board of trustees or charters school board of directors has met and adjusted their current planed mode of instruction or start date. The majority of the public charter schools do not have their reopening plans posted at this time.

Range Planned Start Date:

- Region 1 – 08/27/20 through 09/09/20
- Region 2 – 08/24/20 through 09/14/20
- Region 3 – 08/10/20 through 09/08/20
- Region 4 – 08/17/20 through 09/08/20
- Region 5 – 08/12/20 through 08/31/20
- Region 6 – 08/17/20 through 09/08/20
- Virtual Schools – 08/17/20 through 09/08/20

Based on current information all public schools in Idaho are expected to be providing instruction to their students by the end of the second week in September.

Category of Risk (**majority** of counties reported):

- Region 1 – Category 2 – Yellow (Minimal to Moderate Community Transmission)
- Region 2 – North Central Health - Currently Not Publicly Reported
- Region 3 – Category 3 – Red (Substantial Community Transmission)
- Region 4 – Category 2 – Yellow (Minimal to Moderate Community Transmission)
- Region 5 – Category 1 – Green (No Community Transmission)
- Region 6 – Category 2 – Yellow (Minimal to Moderate Community Transmission)

Based on the local health districts level of risk rating, 53 school districts and charter schools reside in whole or in part in a county that is reporting in Category 1 – Green, 69 school districts and charter schools are in counties identified in Category 2 – Yellow, and 52 are in counties designated as Category 3 – Red. The Idaho Back to School Reopening Framework (Framework) identifies three categories of transmission and identifies the local health authorities as being responsible for identifying the level of transmission within a local community. In some cases a school district may be located in an area identified in a higher category than the level of response they have deployed in the school district at this time. As an example, a school district may be in an area identified as Category 3, however the response from their local reopening plan that has been initiated is their Category 1 or Category 2 response.

In some health districts, Category 2 – Yellow, as defined in the Framework and Attachment 2, has been split into two categories, a yellow and an orange category. These two levels, fall within the Framework's Category 2 and are reported together under Category 2 – Yellow.

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Mode of Instruction (**majority** of school districts and charter schools reporting)

Region 1 – In-person (10 – In-person, 4 – Blended, 1 – Online, 2 – Unknown)

Region 2 – In-person (10 – In-person, 1 – Blended, 2 – Unknown)

Region 3 – In-person (35 – In-person, 9 – Blended, 16 – Online, 10 – Unknown)

Region 4 – In-person (21 – In-person, 1 – Blended, 5 – Unknown)

Region 5 – In-person (17 – In-person, 1 – Blended, 1 – Online, 4 – Unknown)

Region 6 – In-person (16 – In-person, 6 – Blended, 1 – Online, 3 – Unknown)

School districts and charter schools type of instruction is listed based on the modality of instruction provided to the majority of their students. A school may be listed as on-line while still serving students receiving special education services or at-risk students in person in small groups or one-on-one while physically distancing. Schools indicating they are in-person four days a week and on-line one day a week are reported as in-person. Some school districts and charter schools are currently reported as in-person pending local Board action. All schools listed as providing in-person instruction are providing instruction with physical distancing and enhanced cleaning protocol. While a school district may have moved to an online mode of instruction in response to the level of transmission within their community, the school district may still be holding athletic practices or other student activities.

BOARD ACTION

This item is for informational purposes only.

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ATTACHMENT 1

181 Challis Joint	324		6 Custer/ Lemhi	7 (Eastern)	2/1		08/26/20	295	No	https://www.d181.k12.id.us/News/27#sthash.xYzTZNja.dpbs
540C Island Park Charter School	NA	C	6 Fremont	7 (Eastern)	1					
476C Another Choice Virtual Charter District	488	C	Virtual NA	NA	NA	NA	08/19/20	Online Only	NA	459 NA
534C Gem Prep - Online LLC (490)	322	C	Virtual NA	NA	NA	NA	08/17/20	Online Only	NA	361 NA
489C Idaho Technicial Career Academy	159	C	Virtual NA	NA	NA	NA	08/31/20	Online Only	NA	151 NA
452C Idaho Virtual Academy	1,736	C	Virtual NA	NA	NA	NA		Online Only	NA	1561 NA
469C Idaho Virtual Education Partners/Idaho Conne	242	C	Virtual NA	NA	NA	NA		Online Only	NA	222 NA
453C Idaho Virtual HS Richard McKenna	504	C	Virtual NA	NA	NA	NA		Online Only	NA	425 NA
466C iSucceed Charter High	653	C	Virtual NA	NA	NA	NA	08/17/20	Online Only	NA	437 NA
470C Kootenai Bridge Academy	286	C	Virtual NA	NA	NA	NA	09/08/20	Online Only	NA	218 NA

Levels of Community Spread for Idaho Back-to-School Framework

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance in determining the level of community spread **as defined in** “Idaho Back to School Framework,” July 9, 2020, accessed at <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/re-opening/files/Idaho-Back-to-School-Framework-2020.pdf>. Definitions are found in the table on page 8 and reproduced below.

“Identify Level of Transmission Risk”			
	Category 1: No Community Transmission	Category 2: Minimal to Moderate Community Transmission	Category 3: Substantial Community Transmission
Definitions	Evidence of isolated cases, case investigations underway, no evidence of exposure in large communal setting, e.g., healthcare facility, school, mass gathering.	Widespread and/or sustained transmission with high likelihood or confirmed exposure within communal settings, with potential for rapid increase in suspected cases.	Large-scale community transmission, healthcare staffing significantly impacted, multiple cases within communal settings like healthcare facilities, schools, mass gatherings, etc.
Level of Operations	School buildings open with physical distancing and sanitation	School buildings open but option of limited/staggered use of school buildings with physical distancing and sanitation	Targeted, short-term, or extended building closure

For the purposes of this document, community is defined as the geographic area encompassing the area in which the majority of students, their families, and school staff live and work. The community for schools in remote locations with small populations may be readily apparent; in other locations, the community may be more challenging to define, and contiguous geographic entities may be used for identifying level of community spread. For practical purposes, geographic entities are limited to zip codes, cities, and counties.

No Community Transmission

Note that in this document, community transmission is not defined in the same way that community transmission is defined by state and local public health agencies for surveillance case definitions, which is a person with no history of travel exposure, no epidemiologic linkage to a probable or confirmed case, and not a member of a risk cohort defined by public health authorities (e.g., exposure at a facility or event).

1. *Evidence of isolated cases.*
 - a. Cases have travel history as most likely exposure, *or*
 - b. Cases with only second generation* transmission within sporadic contained clusters with known epidemiologic links.

2. *Case investigations underway.*

Case investigations are initiated and contact is made within one working day of report to public health district.

3. *No evidence of exposure in large communal setting (e.g., healthcare facility, school, mass gathering).*

No facility or event-based outbreaks[†] or clusters identified in most recent six weeks.

In public health districts using a 4-level health alert scale, this category most closely aligns with routine or minimal risk alert level.

Minimal to Moderate Community Spread

1. *Widespread and/or sustained transmission.*

- a. Widespread transmission with multiple cases in the community outside of sporadic cases and clusters with known epidemiologic links.
- b. Sustained transmission is more than two generations of cases outside of sporadic clusters with known epidemiologic links.

2. *High likelihood or confirmed exposure within communal settings.*

Facility or event-based outbreaks or clusters identified in most recent six weeks.

3. *Potential for rapid increase in suspected cases.*

Any one of the following:

- a. Community does not require cloth face coverings or physical distancing, or community recommends or requires cloth face covering or physical distancing, but compliance is below 90%.
- b. Median time from sample collection date to laboratory report received by public health is greater than 3 days.
- c. Median time from laboratory report received by public health to contact with patient is greater than 1 working day
- d. Non-response of patients or their contacts to either public health epidemiologists or contact tracers is greater than 10%.
- e. Population R_0 is greater than 1

“Suspected cases” in the context of this document refers to those patients meeting the current Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists probable and confirmed surveillance case definitions.

In public health districts using a 4-level health alert scale, this category most closely aligns with medium or moderate risk alert level.

Substantial Community Transmission

1. *Large-scale community transmission.*

Localized outbreaks or clusters merge to become indistinct (e.g., public health officials unable to determine if source of exposure is associated with specific facility or event or with community transmission).

2. *Healthcare staffing significantly impacted.*

One of the following (a or b):

a. Hospital(s) in community (may be combination of below) have:

- cancelled elective procedures, *or*
- closed to new admissions, *or*
- closed to visits other than emergency department visits, *or*
- implemented contingency operations or crisis capacity standards of care.

b. Primary care providers are closed or have reduced hours.

3. *Multiple cases within communal settings like healthcare facilities, schools, mass gatherings, etc.*

a. Multiple facility or event-based outbreaks identified in most recent six weeks, *and*

b. Multiple cases associated with each outbreak.

In public health districts using a 4-level health alert scale, this category most closely aligns with the high or critical alert level.

*Index patient represents generation 0, close contacts to the index patient that become cases represent generation 1, and contacts to generation 1 cases that become cases represent generation 2.

†Two or more cases associated in time and place or with other epidemiological link.