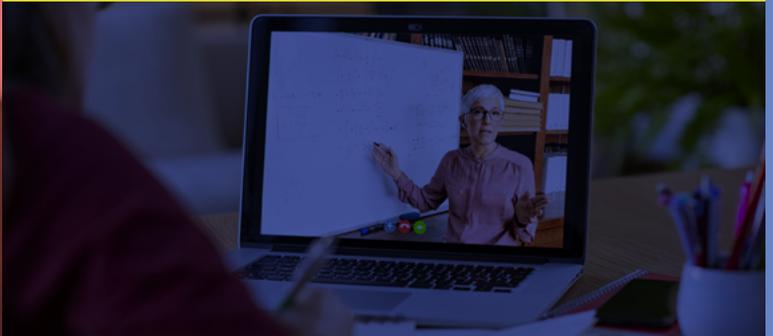




EDUCATING
THROUGH CRISIS
COVID-19



Ensuring Safe & Just Schools During COVID-19: A Roadmap





EDUCATING
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COVID-19

Ensuring Safe & Just Schools During COVID-19: A Roadmap

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A Message from Lily Eskelsen García and Becky Pringle



Friends:

This pandemic – and the chaos that has ensued due to the Trump administration’s failed response – has both laid bare and exacerbated the inequities that exist in our schools, colleges, and communities across this country. From students having to sit in a McDonald’s parking lot to access the internet to families getting their only meals from a school meal delivery program on school buses, we know that while educators do their best, there are still large gaps for many students and families. We also know that though educators want nothing more than to be back in school buildings working face to face with their students, we cannot recklessly put even one student or educator at risk to do so. Instead, we will fight for school and campus reopening plans that explicitly and sufficiently address the needs of students who are or have been disproportionately impacted by systemic and discriminatory racial and social justice policies because our students and educators deserve healthy, safe, and just schools. Educators have the power, when we act together, to ensure that unsafe in-person learning conditions aren’t allowed to put lives at risk.

In this time of crisis, it’s up to us – educators, families, community members – to make sure that both health and safety and student learning are top priorities as discussions take place about returning to in-person instruction. The lives of students, staff, and their families depend on us getting the return to in-person learning right. Kids cannot focus on learning if they’re scared that they or their families might get sick and die. Educators cannot ensure learning is taking place if we don’t fix the digital divide and guarantee every educator and student has a device. We have to take this opportunity to prevent the existing inequities that disproportionately affect Native People, Black, and Brown students and under-resourced communities from worsening. More importantly, we have to strive for justice to make real change that provides opportunities for every student to be successful – even in a pandemic. We know that focusing on racial, social, and economic justice on the front end of making decisions is critical to making sure students and educators have what they need.

That’s why NEA created this toolkit of resources for you to use as your community navigates this time of crisis and works to strengthen public education systems. We’ve built tools for you to consider what’s in your district’s plans, and to advocate for the things you know should be included. As always, the more than 3 million members of the National Education Association stand ready to educate our nation’s students. And we know there are considerations and questions that every educator and decision-maker should think about before returning to face-to-face learning to ensure that every student and educator returns to healthy, safe, and just spaces for learning.

We hope you’ll find these resources useful. You can find more at www.educatingthroughcrisis.org and at www.nea.org/safeandjust. Please, tell us how things are going by sharing your stories with us through the form on our Educating Through Crisis website. Let’s get this right – for all of us.



Lily Eskelsen García
President
National Education Association



Rebecca S. Pringle
President-Elect
National Education Association



Ensuring Safe & Just Schools During COVID-19: A Roadmap Overview



This guide provides local affiliates with a road map of potential next steps they could take as they confront the possible reopening of school buildings and campuses.

This multi-step approach is comprehensive, and your local affiliate can pick and choose from the tools in this guide, ensuring that your road map works best for your local and your community. In other words, make it your own! None of this is meant to be prescriptive.

Before we get into the weeds, here's an overview of what this guide covers:

Grading Our District's Return to In-Person Learning Plan. This survey and rubric help local associations evaluate their school district's building reopening plan – if it exists. If it doesn't exist, it may be informative by providing content for what should be in a district's reopening plan. If your local has already evaluated your district's plan, then your local can skip this part.

Knowing the Gaps & Taking Action: What Next? This section focuses on engaging rank and file members to develop a strategy that helps them secure their vision for how school districts should reopen and how educators and students should return to in-person learning.

Ultimately, this section is about a series of steps that can support a local affiliate in building power to win not only on their vision of reopening, but on a vision of a more racially and socially equitable and just society. Importantly, these are some of the steps that local affiliates across the country have taken or are taking – we have just condensed and aggregated them here for users.

STEPS INCLUDE

- 1 Complete the "Grading Our District's Return to In-Person Learning Plan" Survey
- 2 Convene Membership Meeting to Discuss "Grading Our District's Return to In-Person Learning Plan" Survey Results
- 3 Share Content with Members on Local Affiliate Media Properties
- 4 Obtain Commitments for a Demands + Actions Committee Meeting
- 5 Promote Demands + Actions Committee Meeting
- 6 Hold Demands + Actions Committee Meeting
- 7 Complete Demands + Actions Survey
- 8 Review Demands + Actions Survey Results
- 9 Promote Next Steps Membership Meeting
- 10 Next Steps Membership Meeting
- 11 Implement Actions!
- 12 Share Your Story

Again, your local can pick and choose what steps it chooses to take. We also know that many locals have already completed many of these steps, don't worry about repeating them.

We strongly encourage that locals share their stories with NEA as a last step. We want to lift up and share across our nation the stories of resistance, of resilience, and of perseverance with other educators and communities.





Grading Our District's Return to In-Person Learning Plan

Does Your District's Plan Make the Grade?

Your district (and, in some cases, your school) may have developed a plan for returning to in-person learning. Does it work, practically? Are there gaps? And if so...what does that mean for students and educators in your school community?

Each of the items below are designed to be simple "yes" or "no" questions for your consideration as you review your school district's plan to return to in-person learning. For each item, place a Y or N in the chart on page 6. Use this to determine your local affiliate's response to your district's face-to-face learning plan to reopen school buildings.

1. Health Expertise

- a. Were CDC guidelines incorporated into your district's plan?
- b. Did state health guidance figure into your district's plan?
- c. Were local public health professionals consulted in creating your district's plan?
- d. Is there a plan to have ongoing/sustained consultation from public health professionals?
- e. Have local health officials confirmed that transmission rates are low and have been declining over the past two weeks, as measured by infection rates, hospitalization rates, and hospital capacity?
- f. Is there a clear plan in place for when someone gets sick on a school campus?
- g. Will there be a registered nurse or health professional on each campus?

2. Educator and Family Voice

- a. Was the local union (NEA affiliate) involved in the creation of the plan?
- b. Were educators, families, students, and other community leaders surveyed for feedback before your district's plan was created?
- c. Were school-based educators on the team that created your district's plan?
- d. Was there a team or committee of educators who were consulted in creating your district's plan?
- e. Did the district include all education professionals (classroom teachers, education support professionals, specialized instructional support personnel, librarians, administrators, etc.) in creating the district's plan?
- f. Is there a plan in place to ensure broad stakeholder engagement?
- g. Does the plan reflect the input of educators who were consulted?
- h. Does the plan reflect the input of families, parents, and students?
- i. Does the plan reflect the input of community stakeholders and community partners?

3. Access to Protection

- a. Does your district's plan incorporate a means for consistent provision of cleaning and disinfecting supplies to every school so the school will not run out?
- b. Does your district's plan address students who arrive at school without the required cloth face coverings?





- c. Does your district's plan incorporate additional PPE for those responsible for cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces?
- d. Has the district's plan accounted for necessary ventilation improvements to follow CDC guidelines?
- e. Does your district's plan address the differing safety needs of school employees based on their roles in the return to in-person instruction? (School counselors, custodians, food services professionals, bus drivers, paraeducators, librarians, classroom teachers, etc.)

4. Leading with Equity

- a. Does your district's plan address the specific needs of Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other students of color?
- b. Does your district's plan address the specific needs of students with disabilities?
- c. Does the district have a plan to ensure every student and educator has the appropriate devices (not one that is shared) and adequate access to broadband and/or networks?
- d. Has your district's plan accounted for other opportunity gaps that have been exacerbated by this pandemic crisis?
- e. Does your district's plan incorporate a transportation plan that will provide for those students without alternatives to school bus routes?
- f. If your district is using a modified schedule (such as A/B day or week, etc.), is there a consideration for meal services for students when they are not physically present on campus?
- g. Does your district's plan incorporate reaching families in multiple languages and modalities, and listening to their ideas and concerns?
- h. Does your district's plan reflect any culturally responsive strategies?

5. Focus on Instruction

- a. Is there a clear plan in place, developed with educators, for continuous learning in the event of a spike in infection rates in your community?
- b. Does your district's plan take into account the different ways that students learn? (Students needing visual cues, students needing auditory cues, etc.)
- c. Does your district's plan address the need to bridge last year's learning to instruction planned for this school year?
- d. Does your district's plan leverage the opportunity to create/build curriculum and resources that are reflective of the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the school community?
- e. Has your district's plan accounted for the social and emotional needs and the traumatic impacts of the pandemic crisis on students' well-being?
- f. Does your district's plan include policies that support trauma-informed practices?

6. Professional Learning Priorities

- a. Does your district's plan ensure training for staff on health and safety protocols? (Cleaning, mask-wearing, social distancing, etc.)
- b. Does your district's plan include professional development to support educators' transition to virtual teaching and learning conditions?
- c. Is your district providing professional learning opportunities through a stable, secure online platform to support educators' continued growth during this pandemic crisis?





Grading Our District’s Return to In-Person Learning Plan — Rubric



Ratings:

Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4			Q5			Q6		
	Y	N		Y	N		Y	N		Y	N		Y	N		Y	N
A			A			A			A			A			A		
B			B			B			B			B			B		
C			C			C			C			C			C		
D			D			D			D			D					
E			E			E			E			E					
F			F						F			F					
G			G						G								
			H			H											
						I											

Totals:

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Looking at the total number of “yes” vs. “no” responses for your district’s plan, do you believe your district’s plan appropriately accounts for the needs of educators and students in reopening school buildings to return to in-person instruction? What do you believe should be communicated to district leaders? Parents and families? Community members? Local elected officials? Should other items be considered or put into place?





STEP 2 Convene Membership Meeting to Discuss NEA Return to In-Person Learning Survey Results.

Hold a virtual general membership meeting and share survey results with rank and file members.

We have provided a template agenda that you could use at this membership meeting. It helps set up for educators what the union is doing and why it is doing it.

Template Membership Meeting Agenda

Agenda Item	Sample Talking Points	Time (Mins)
<p>Welcome & Meeting Focus</p> <p>Local leadership welcomes members</p> <p>Why are we here? (meeting focus)</p> <p>Walk through agenda with members</p>	<p>The plan for how our district could return to in-person learning represents one of the most important moments in our professional lives. The health and safety of our students, our co-workers, and our families depend on getting this process right. Lives are literally on the line.</p> <p>This meeting will allow us to share an assessment of our district's plan based on criteria established by the National Education Association, our national union; to hear your reactions to that assessment; and to discuss the next steps we can take to ensure that this plan is improved to the point we all can feel confident that it strikes a balance between the benefits students and staff know come from in-person instruction with the risks to health and lives that come from close physical proximity during these times.</p>	<p>5-10</p>
<p>NEA Return to In-Person Learning Survey</p> <p>Explain the survey's purpose to members</p>	<p>Grading Our District's Plan: Share the rubric, share how our district's plan scores on the rubric. Discussion Questions: What is the strongest point of our district's current plan? What is the weakest point of our district's current plan?</p>	<p>5-10</p>
<p>Now What? Plan to Win</p>	<p>We have the power to shape this plan into something better, safer, and more equitable if we are willing to band together and use our voices. We must act together by doing the following:</p> <p>Reach out to our colleagues who aren't at today's meeting to educate them about the district's plan, its strengths and weaknesses, and to hear their concerns and ideas. Every voice needs to be heard.</p> <p>Collectively determine return to in person learning and related actions.</p> <p>Demonstrate our resolve to the district to win the improvements necessary to ensure the safe return to in-person learning for our students, educators, and our families - by working and acting together.</p>	<p>10</p>





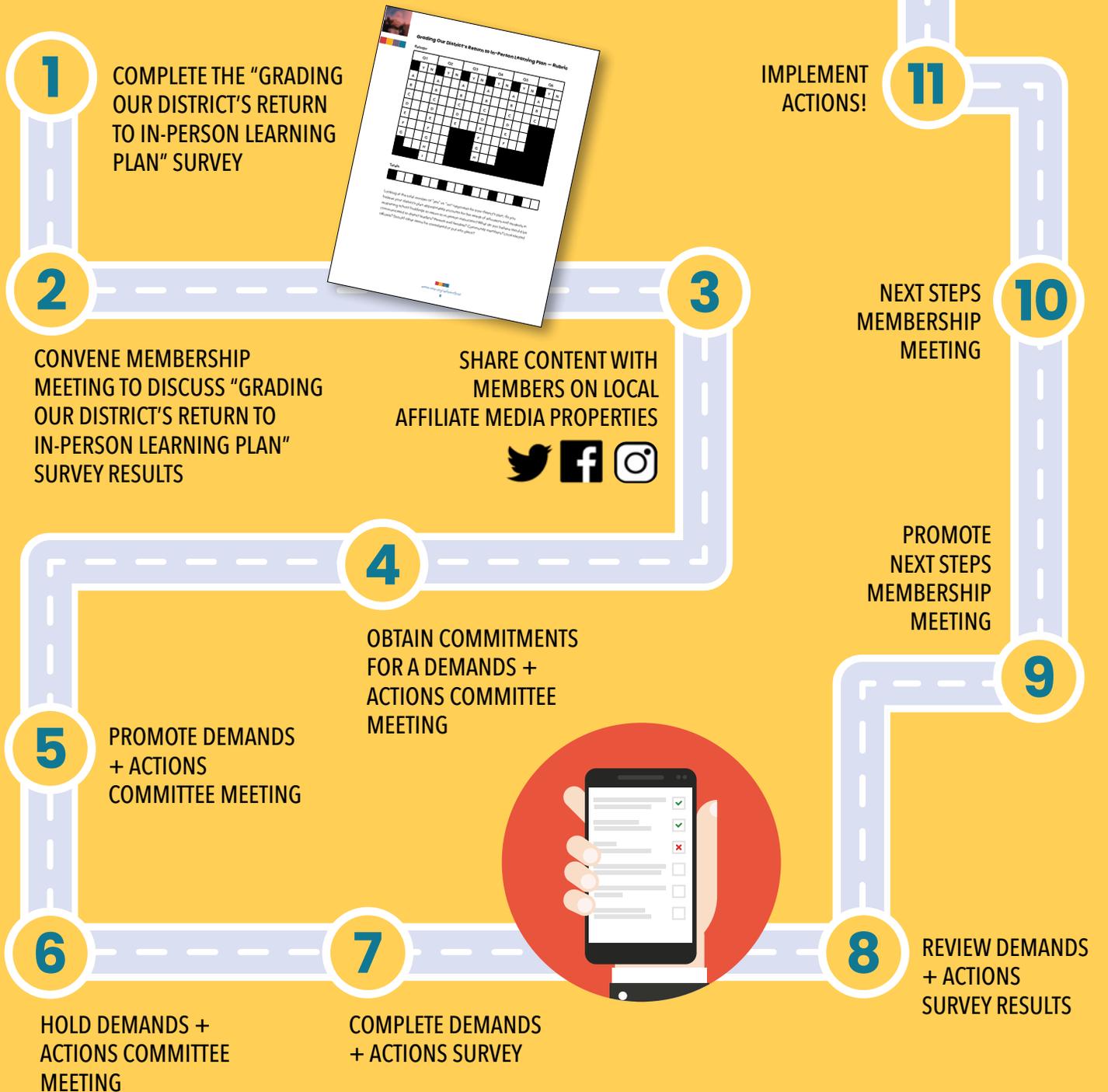
Agenda Item	Sample Talking Points	Time (Mins)
<p>Now What? Plan to Win <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p>Clearly communicating to educators, parents, and district leaders our demands for improvements to the plan;</p> <p>Engaging in a series of actions that will escalate if necessary, to demonstrate growing parent, educator, and community support for our demands, and;</p> <p>Meeting with our district’s leaders to negotiate these improvements.</p>	
<p>Demands+ Actions Virtual Committee Meeting</p>	<p>Ask participants to join the Demands + Actions virtual committee meeting to brainstorm what demands and actions should be circulated in an online survey to colleagues.</p> <p>What’s missing? What are our reopen demands? Ask members to join the local association’s next virtual meeting to develop a petition with reopen demands.</p> <p>Now what? What actions are members willing to take? Ask members to join local association’s next virtual meeting to brainstorm the actions educators are willing to take to push the district to meet their reopen demands.</p>	
<p>What’s Next?</p>	<p>Tell members what’s up next based on results, namely, the development of a petition with the local association’s demands for what educators need before they can physically return to in-person learning, and what actions educators are willing to take to push the district to meet their reopen demands.</p>	



TEMPLATE PLAN TO WIN

What's a plan to win? A plan to win is like a road map that summarizes the steps that the union is going to take to reach its objectives. Having a map instills confidence in members – it allows them to know that the union isn't just being reactive. And more importantly, it's a road map that wants member input.

Here's a **PLAN TO WIN ROAD MAP** informed by the guidance in this document:





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Best Practices for Holding Virtual Meetings

Virtual meetings can be run efficiently, using these basic meeting best practices and easy-to-use, inexpensive technology.

Here are a few pointers to make that happen:

- Use video.** To make people feel like they're all at the "same" meeting, use video conferencing rather than traditional conference lines. Technology – such as Zoom, Skype, and GoToMeeting – helps to personalize the conversation and to keep participants engaged.
- Stick to meeting basics.** Prior to the conversation, set clear objectives, and send a pre-read if appropriate. During the session, use an agenda, set meeting ground rules, and clearly outline next steps after each section and at the end of the meeting.
- Minimize presentation length.** The only thing worse than a long presentation in person is a long presentation during a virtual meeting. Meetings should be discussions.
- Capture real-time feedback.** Gathering and processing high-quality input during a virtual meeting can be challenging, especially since visual cues are harder to read. Use the survey tool option to collect on-demand feedback from attendees on specific topics in real time.
- Debrief your meeting.** After the meeting concludes, gather and debrief about the experience. What went well, and what didn't? How can you evolve your virtual meetings to make them as productive as when you meet in person?





STEP 3 Share Information with Other Educators.

We know not everyone can join virtual Association meetings in real time – hello: life, family, work, commitments! We recommend that local leaders record their Zoom sessions so that they can be shared with others and create a video summarizing what the union is doing and why it’s important to be engaged.

The local leader should summarize what the video is about, why the topics being addressed in the video are important to educators, then summarize the Return to In-Person Learning survey and the local association ask to its members.

See Sample: <https://www.facebook.com/christian.peabody/posts/10157551575850544>

STAFFORD EDUCATION ASSOCIATION



STEP 4 Obtain Commitments for a Demands + Actions Committee Meeting

It’s important to ensure that educators - both members and non-members - have an opportunity to participate in their union and to engage one another. Educator voice is not just lifted up at a school board meeting or at the bargaining table, but also through the union, educator-to-educator. Educator voice is not just an end product, but a process.

Rather than have a small team select the demands and actions that will be placed on your local association’s Demands + Actions survey, we encourage your leadership team to invite all to participate in a committee meeting focused on refining the options that will be placed on this survey. This ensures that as many educators’ voices will be reflected in a final survey.

Hustle, text, email your contact lists - consider posting the invite on Facebook - and obtain educators’ commitments to join the Demands + Actions Committee Meeting. And we all get busy - so it’s worth sending a reminder email or text 2-3 days before the committee meeting.





STEP 5 Promote Demands + Actions Committee Meeting.

Make sure that the worksite leaders and building representatives are part of this committee. These individuals should be trusted by fellow association members at their respective worksite. Consider promoting this next meeting via social media.



STEP 6 Hold Demands + Actions Committee Meeting.

This meeting will focus on drafting the Return to In-Person Learning demands survey. Why do another survey? The results of the Demands + Actions survey results will inform what goes into the final school board resolution and will be the basis of the actions that your local takes. You want to make sure your members are with you and aren't surprised by these demands and the actions the union will take to achieve these demands.



Template Membership Meeting Agenda



Welcome & Meeting Focus

Why are we here? Why is this urgent?
A facilitator should figure out how much time you'll need.



Demands + Actions

Why do we need to make demands? Why do we need to consider actions?



Review template NEA Demands + Actions Survey with committee members

What's missing? What should be added? What should be removed?
Get feedback from committee members?

Finalize final Demands + Actions Survey

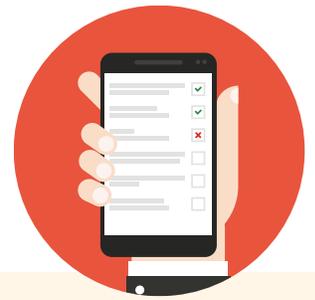
Closing and Next Steps





STEP 7 Complete Demands + Actions Survey.

Distribute your local's Reopen Demands Survey to your members. Post Reopen Demands + Actions Survey on your local association's social media properties.



Template Demands + Actions Survey

The survey below seeks to identify the potential demands that our [insert name of your local education association] should be making of our local school district and school board before educators are willing to return to in-person learning.

Please mark those boxes below that you believe should be included in our local education association's demands:

We, the members of the [insert name of local education association] will not physically return to in-person learning until the following are achieved and agreed upon by [insert local education association]



- COVID-19 transmission rates in the community are low and declining over at least the past two (2) weeks as measured by key indicators, including but not limited to infection rates, hospitalization rates, and hospital capacity.
- Social distancing plans are in place to ensure that all individuals who enter a school or worksite can maintain six (6) feet of physical distance, and, where necessary, class size reductions reconfiguring classrooms and readjusting school schedules and traffic patterns. Safe school-sponsored transportation must also be provided including reconfiguring school buses and transportation schedules to allow for distancing.
- Deterrence plans to prevent a spike in COVID-19 transmission are in place, including but not limited to mandatory face coverings and other personal protective equipment (PPE) provided by the employer, hand washing requirements, plexiglass installations, HVAC modifications, and sufficient classroom materials and supplies for each student.
- Accommodation plans, including mechanisms to ensure their compliance, are in place to protect high-risk students, staff, and families, including but not limited to remote learning and instruction arrangements. real time.
- Deep-cleaning procedures and protocols are in place for daily cleaning and disinfecting of schools, campus buildings, and worksites, as well as frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces and spaces, such as restrooms.
- Detection procedures are in place to detect COVID-19 cases among students, staff, and visitors, including training on symptoms, requiring those who are sick or are manifesting symptoms to stay at home, isolation of symptomatic individuals, and closing school buildings and worksites to contain potential outbreaks.
- Quarantine, isolation, and notification procedures are in place, including triggers for school/campus closures to in-person instruction, that are clear to families and staff. A protocol is in place that provides for notification of individuals exposed in school to someone with COVID-19, for immediate isolation of that person, and quarantines of those who have been exposed. Robust plans exist for continuity of instruction through substitutes or other instruction when teachers



or professors must quarantine or when in-person instruction must be closed. During any such closure, continuity of instruction, nutrition, and support services for all students must be provided.

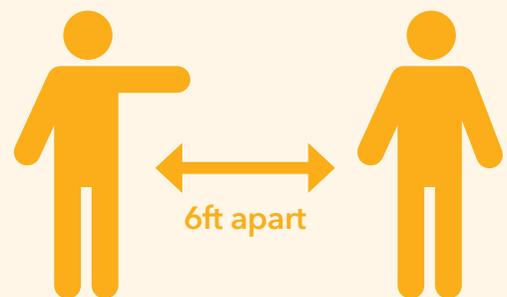
- Procedures are in place to ensure educators and families have a voice in how the return to in-person instruction occurs and how necessary protections function throughout the school year. Potential avenues for educator and family input include district- and building-level health and safety committees and, where possible, collective bargaining.
- Health and safety protections and protocols are in place and are independently enforced through regular, unannounced building inspections by local health authorities and a widely publicized hotline to report violations. Whistleblowers must be protected against all retaliation or adverse actions.
- Clear policies are established for how protective measures will be enforced consistently, ensuring that disparate discipline of students or staff does not occur.
- Instruction plans are in place (whether in-person or virtual) that ensure racial and social equity in the provision of instruction and support services. Plan includes training for educators, families, and students on the processes and protocols in the event a COVID-19 outbreak necessitates returning, in whole or in part, to virtual instruction. Educators are involved at each step of the planning process for any form of virtual teaching and learning, including adjusting the curriculum and methods of instruction.
- Continuous learning plans are in place that address device access for every student and educator, high-speed internet access for every student and educator, and that accommodate gaps in such services.

Additional Template Demands

- Attendance policies are adjusted to ensure students are not penalized if they contract the virus and have prolonged absences. Those policies must consider additional supports students may require should they need extended rehabilitation from home.
- No reduction or privatization of ESP jobs during the pandemic. Put limitations on unpaid furloughs; continue paid benefits on any furlough.
- Hazard pay is offered for ESPs responsible for cleaning high-touch areas and managing waste that might contain contaminants.
- Medical leave policies (e.g., additional paid sick leave) must be adjusted to ensure educators continue to be compensated and do not exhaust their leave should they be forced to quarantine or be out due to their own illness.

HELPFUL HINT

Run survey for a limited period, with a clear start and end date.





Template Escalating Action Survey

Any actions your local association takes should focus on highlighting your demands and should have a target. For instance, a letter to the editor should underscore that your local association is demanding that the school or campus building reopening plan must include medical leave policies ensuring educators are paid in full and their leave days remain untouched should they be forced to quarantine.

- Letter to the editor
- Letter to the superintendent/school board
- Set up online petition
- Email campaign internally within the union
- Email campaign externally with the community
- Record and post educator testimonials online and share with local media outlets
- Draft physical letters for school board members and physically drop them off at a school board meeting
- Zoom or Facebook rally
- Virtual action at a school board meeting; “pack” a school board Zoom meeting by organizing parents and educators to fill up the public comment period
- Light Brigade
- Thematic car caravan (e.g., Workers and Students First) or “Motor March”
- Socially distanced in-person targeted rally (e.g., local public health department, school board)
- Socially distanced in-person rally at the state capitol
- Consider additional labor actions to ensure schools and worksites open safely – be creative!

STEP 8 Review Demands + Actions Survey Results.

Convene your local association’s leadership team and review the results.

- Use the Demands results to tailor your Ensuring Safe and Just Schools for All Students school board resolution that will be shared with your members.
- Review the Actions results to understand what actions your members are willing to take to achieve their Return Demands.
- Determine your local association’s next steps to get the school board resolution passed and be prepared to share these at the next general membership meeting.
- Develop an Escalating Action Calendar that corresponds to the actions members indicated they were willing to take.



STEP 9 Promote Next Steps Membership Meeting.

It's important to drive virtual attendance for this next meeting. Consider having an attendance goal. Make sure to invite members and potential members.



Support among your fellow educators, parents, and community members will be a critical piece in building momentum. Log on to www.educatingthroughcrisis.org to find resources to use on your personal and affiliate social networks to help mobilize support, spread the word and advocate for your school community

Best Practices for Making a Membership Ask



- Consider having someone who recently joined to share their story for why they joined the union; also consider having a new and early career educator share their story for why they joined
- Make sure to share the Join Now link or an electronic membership form
- Remind attendees that there is power in their union and that they are demonstrating that power and resolve together through these discussions





STEP 10 Next Steps Membership Meeting.

Share the results of the Demands + Actions Survey and your School Board Resolution with your members. This meeting should also focus on what comes next. What are the next steps that the union and its members are going to take to get the School Board Resolution passed?

- Share Demands + Actions Survey results
- Share School Board Resolution
- Share Escalating Action Calendar
- Be prepared to discuss why the local may decline to take actions that a percentage of the membership
- Membership Ask

Template Membership Meeting Agenda



Welcome & Meeting Focus

Why are we here? What have we done thus far?
Celebrate what you and your union have done together so far.



Share Demands + Actions Survey Results

What does this mean for the local association?
What concrete steps will we take next?



Share the finalized School Board Resolution

Answer any questions or concerns

Share the finalized Escalating Action Calendar

Answer any questions or concerns



Membership Ask

Close



STEP 11 Implement Actions!

Actions are what matter most. They demonstrate both to union members and to external stakeholders the power of the union and what union members are willing to do to ensure the safety of their students and their communities.





STEP 12 Share Your Story.

Use the following [link](#) to share with NEA your demands and proposed actions – and to let us know how your actions are going!



Connect With Us

As the country grapples with the impact of COVID-19, our members are looking for help and hope. Use the form below to share how you're getting through this tough time, a story about an educator going beyond the call of duty, or an inspiring photo or video.

Name*

First: Last:

Title **Email***

Phone **State**

Affiliate Name

Your Story

Share your story

"If we are able to make our voices known collectively, it brings a lot of weight to bear on the decision-makers," says Archuleta, adding that by **"raising up our members' voices ... we really turned the tide."**
 Nick Archuleta, a high school teacher and North Dakota United president

"We haven't even been able to join the conversation, let alone be part of decision making," says Tammy LaPlante, secretary of the Ashtabula Association of Classified School Employees and member of the Ohio Education Association board.

"Imagine a state that forces faculty and staff to choose between their lives and their livelihoods," said Paul Ortiz, history professor and union leader at the University of Florida, where the reopening plan doesn't even require students to be tested for COVID-19, he pointed out.





On the Horizon

We know that the safe reopening of school buildings, campuses, and worksites for students and educators weighs heavily on our minds. But we also recognize that many of us are facing or know those who are facing other serious worries.

The pandemic and the failure to provide a robust response to this public health crisis has exacerbated the existing economic and social inequities that existed pre-COVID and disproportionately impact Native People, Black, and Brown communities.

We encourage local affiliates to consider the other priorities that students, educators, and community members are facing now – or will face on the horizon – and to consider developing demands that address these concerns.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of issues to consider:

Federal Funding. We know that most of the CARES Act federal funding has not been spent. Consider pushing for CARES Act funding to be spent to supplement, rather than supplant, current spending on education.



Not sure what demands your members could make regarding CARES Act funding? You could run a survey like the Education Support Employees Association (ESEA) did to find out. Their survey questions included:

- PPE for all ESPs and purchase of cleaning supplies for safe working conditions
- Development of COVID-19 training programs for ESPs returning to work
- Easier access to the sick leave pool
- Expand paid sick leave to all ESPs
- No privatization of ESPs
- Re-hire all ESPs that were working pre-COVID
- Pay all ESPs at least \$15/hour or a living wage

No Layoffs and Unpaid Furloughs. Budget shortfalls could lead to possible layoffs and furloughs of educators, particularly education support professionals. CARES Act funds can be spent to maintain existing school district staff. Consider whether the existing district staff is sufficient to ensure the safe reopening of schools, or if additional staffers need to be hired.





JeffCo ESP in Colorado recognized that the current staffing arrangement didn't cut it for keeping students and educators safe. Their demands include:

Fully Staffed Education Support Professionals

- More custodians to keep our schools clean and sanitized
- More paras and school staff to support students
- More bus drivers and assistants [to secure] a safe way to get to school while social distancing

Cancel Evictions. We know that many in our communities face possible eviction with moratoriums ending. Extend moratoriums and cancel any pending evictions.

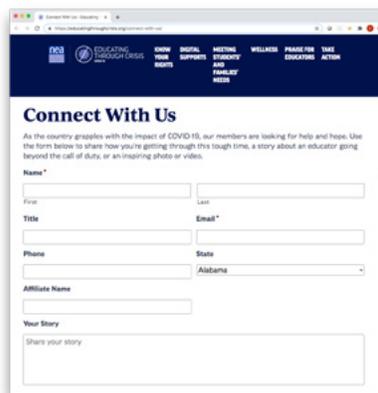
Housing Security. Related to evictions, we know that housing security was an issue pre-COVID – gentrification and the rising cost of housing led to increased rates of homelessness and housing insecurity.



Consider the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) demands on housing security:

“There is no ‘safer at home’ for those who do not have a home. Students need stability, and cities have the power to pass ordinances to prevent evictions and provide rental relief funds. Instead of just one-time relief, as was passed by the LA City Council in June 2020, housing can be a human right assisted by the state...sheltering the homeless community is a matter of political will, not scarce resources. Over 15,000 homeless students in LAUSD need permanent shelter.”

Don't forget to share your organizing stories with us:
<https://educatingthroughcrisis.org/connect-with-us>



Sample Letter to School District Leadership

To: District Leadership

Re: Return to In-Person Learning Plans

This pandemic crisis has created chaos in the everyday lives of nearly every American, including the citizens of our community. It has changed how we handle mundane tasks such as grocery shopping and getting our mail, and has created major economic and educational disruptions. As we collectively continue to weather this difficult time, we know that you are working diligently to create a plan for returning to in-person instruction for our students and educators that ensures the health, safety, and wellness of all while also ensuring the quality education opportunities every student deserves.

As you consider adjustments to plans that may already be in place, and as you plan forward into the late fall and winter, we must urge that you consider the following:

- Reopening school and campus buildings for in-person learning must wait until transmission rates in the community are both low AND declining over at least the past two weeks as measured by key indicators such as infection rates, hospitalization rates, and hospital capacity.
- Plans must be built in a way that protects the health and safety of our students, staff, and community, and allows our students the opportunity to grow and learn academically, socially, and emotionally.
- Some families and students do not currently feel comfortable returning to a brick-and-mortar building due to the COVID-19 pandemic or a personal health condition; therefore, there should be a fully virtual learning option for all students that incorporates ensuring access to broadband internet and a learning device for each student and educator.
- Policies and practices must be examined to identify opportunities to implement evidence-based, sustainable changes to end negative racial impacts and incorporate into district curriculum the history of racial oppression, works by black authors and works from diverse perspectives.
- Ensure specific protections upon returning to in-person learning to keep the virus under control and protect students and staff, including making sure high-risk students and staff are protected through appropriate accommodations; ensuring all necessary steps have been taken to maintain six feet of physical distance among all students, staff, and visitors throughout the day; using strong deterrence measures like mandatory face coverings, regular hand washing, plexiglass protections, working HVAC systems, and sufficient classroom supplies so that students don't need to share; deep-cleaning protocols for schools, campuses, and buses; detection procedures that apply to students, educators, and visitors; quarantine, isolation, and notification procedures; policies ensuring educator, student, and family engagement in decision-making and implementation; regular monitoring and whistleblower protections; and enforcement of protection measures.



- Ensure continuous learning for students, incorporating a plan for instruction (whether in-person or virtual) that addresses racial and social equity in the provision of instruction and support services; includes training for educators, students, and families on the processes and protocols in the event a COVID-19 outbreak necessitates returning, in whole or in part, to virtual instruction; has involved educators, students, and families in each step of the planning process for any form of virtual teaching and learning, including adjusting the curriculum and methods of instruction; and addresses device access for every student and educator, high-speed internet access for every student and educator, and accommodates gaps in such services.

Each of these demands is critical to ensuring the continuing quality instruction of students in our school communities, protecting the health and safety of all members of our school community – students, families, educators, and community leaders – and ensuring that we work collectively and collaboratively to eradicate inequities our students face daily. We look forward to working with you to take action that does just that.



Ensuring Safe & Just Schools for All Students

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of each public school and institution of higher education to ensure a welcoming, healthy and safe community for students and educators to thrive regardless of their ZIP Code, color or background; and

WHEREAS, schools should work to foster a sense of community among students, educators and families; and

WHEREAS, given the conditions of human interaction at public education worksites, it is necessary for school districts and institutions of higher education to establish and adhere to rigorous protocols for the safe operation of such; and those protocols must be far more detailed and rigorous than what the federal government has thus set forth; and

WHEREAS, school districts and institutions of higher education must create protocols for safe reopening of school buildings in partnership with educators and other education stakeholders --including local education associations/unions, families and students; and

WHEREAS, if public schools and higher education institutions are to return to in-person learning in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is the responsibility of each school district and institution to do so safely, responsibly, and equitably; and

WHEREAS, leading public health experts agree that reopening school and campus buildings for in-person learning must wait until transmission rates in the community are both low AND declining over at least the past two weeks as measured by key indicators such as infection rates, hospitalization rates, and hospital capacity; and

WHEREAS, [District or IHE] decisions about school restrictions and the way in which schooling can occur either by In Person Instruction, Blended Learning, and/or Remote Learning will be built upon and in compliance with federal, state, and community health guidance; and

WHEREAS, the fact that COVID-19 risks and impacts are disproportionately concentrated in America's communities of color, including medical risk factors, job losses, housing insecurity, food insecurity, and mortality rates has been well-documented; and



WHEREAS, as COVID-19 has shined a bright light on vast racial inequities in society, the pandemic also highlights vast systemic injustices in the education system, including the facts that Black and brown students, LGBTQ students and differently abled students face disproportionately high discipline rates; 47 states and DC do not meet the recommended student to counselor ratio; and, although funding for law enforcement in public schools has been on the rise, according to the US Office of Civil Rights data:

- 1.7 million students are in schools with police but no counselors
- 3 million students are in schools with police but no school health professionals
- 6 million students are in schools with police but no school psychologists
- 10 million students are in schools with police but no school social workers
- 14 million students are in schools with police but no counselor, school health professional, school psychologist or school social worker

WHEREAS, education technology is a tool to enhance and enrich instruction for students and access to working technology and WiFi is a necessity for students to complete assignments and access needed resources -- even when not facing full-time virtual learning environments; and

WHEREAS, 1 in 5 Black and Brown households and 37 percent of rural households do not have access to high-speed internet; and

WHEREAS, the effective use of technology for the enhancement of student learning across different learning styles and needs requires training and support for educators, and it is the responsibility of each public school district and institution of higher education to provide such training; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that [District or IHE] and the public education worksites within our jurisdiction will not reopen for in-person instruction until the COVID-19 pandemic is under control in the community around us in accordance with CDC guidelines, and will only reopen for in-person instruction when we can do so in a safe, responsible and equitable manner that ensures the health and safety of our students, staff, families, and community, and can guarantee our students the opportunity to grow and learn academically, socially, and emotionally in a safe manner.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that [District or IHE] is committed to ensuring that all students are able to effectively access and engage in high-quality virtual learning opportunities, and as our community has varying health and family needs, virtual learning options will remain available during the COVID-19 pandemic even in the case of a full or partial return to in-person learning, to ensure that students can continue to learn while addressing their family's safety.



BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that before [District or IHE] returns to in-person learning, specific protections will be in place to keep the virus under control and protect students and staff, including making sure high-risk students and staff are protected through appropriate accommodations; ensuring all necessary steps have been taken to maintain six feet of physical distance among all students, staff, and visitors throughout the day; using strong deterrence measures like mandatory face coverings, regular hand washing, plexiglass protections, effective HVAC systems, clean water, and sufficient classroom supplies so that students don't need to share; deep cleaning protocols for schools, campuses, and buses; detection procedures that apply to students, educators, and visitors; quarantine, isolation, and notification procedures; policies ensuring educator, student, and family engagement in decision-making and implementation; regular monitoring and whistleblower protections; and enforcement of protection measures.

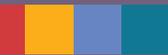
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that [District or IHE] has developed plans to ensure continuous learning for students, including a plan for instruction (whether in-person or virtual) that addresses racial and social equity in the provision of instruction and support services; includes training for educators, students, and families on the processes and protocols in the event a COVID-19 outbreak necessitates returning, in whole or in part, to virtual instruction; has involved educators, students, and families in each step of the planning process for any form of virtual teaching and learning, including adjusting the curriculum and methods of instruction; and addresses device access for every student and educator, high-speed internet access for every student and educator, and accommodates gaps in such services.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED [District or IHE] will train staff in proven strategies such as restorative justice practices and trauma-informed practices, and will work to increase counseling and school health staff to effectively and empathetically support students so they can learn, grow and thrive through the pandemic and beyond.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that [District or IHE] will provide coordinators to support and respond to student and family concerns around issues (including but not limited to technology access, student health and well-being, students with IEPs, English Language Learners, students who are differently abled, students experiencing homelessness, LGBTQ students, students experiencing grief, and students accessing school meals), as well as offering additional supports such as group counseling, adult mentors, or referrals to community organizations that offer social services.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that regardless of the education delivery system during the pandemic, [District or IHE], will provide all students the care and attention and learning opportunities they are guaranteed and deserve.





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