COLLABORATION IN ACTION: Safely Re-Opening America's School Buildings After the COVID-19 Crisis

Truly collaborative education partnerships must begin with an agreement made by administrators, education association/union leaders and other education stakeholders to "start somewhere" by picking an issue of shared interest, and begin working together to address it. As we face the effects of a global pandemic, and how to safely reopen America's school buildings, never has there been a clearer place to start. *Using a collaborative framework as a guideline, this document is intended to aid education stakeholders as they tackle the issue of re-opening America's school buildings together.*

THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

PREPARE
- Broadly share the benefits of collaboration (better outcomes for students and educators, lasting change, etc.)
- Represent community needs and priorities and include diverse viewpoints
- Reach out to stakeholders and make a commitment to partner
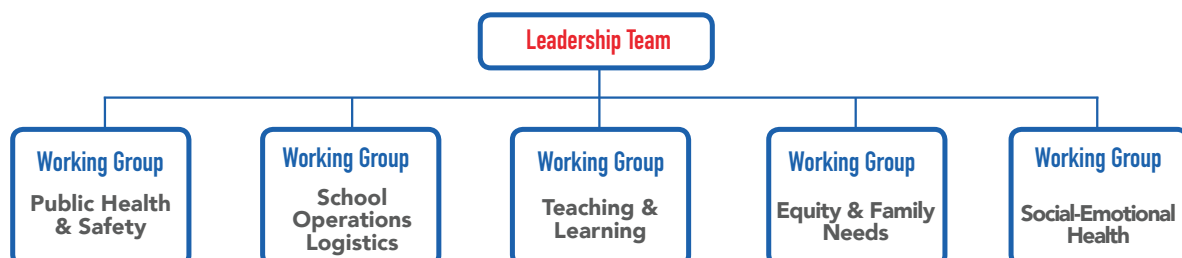
ACT
- Establish a leadership team to oversee and support working groups
- Establish working groups with members from all levels of the system to co-create solutions within their assigned topic
- Create and implement plans for oversight, support, communication and reflection, including your goal (safe re-opening) and objectives (major issues)

REFLECT
- Determine how well you were able to meet your goals
- Determine how to sustain the collaborative structures and processes you created
- Reference myschoolmyvoice.nea.org/collaborating-for-student-success to learn more about the collaborative movement

ASSEMBLE YOUR TEAMS TO TACKLE THE ISSUES

Consider the issue areas that your crisis teams will address and structure yourselves accordingly. Remember that a strong leadership team composition would include leaders and representatives from administration, the education association/union, school boards, and parent and community groups, *particularly those representing historically marginalized populations.*

Leadership Team

Working Group	Working Group	Working Group	Working Group	Working Group
Public Health & Safety	School Operations Logistics	Teaching & Learning	Equity & Family Needs	Social-Emotional Health

ADDRESS KEY ISSUES

It's important that each working group explore key questions in their respective issue areas to meet their objectives. We suggest that in each issue area you create a statement about your intentions, how you will achieve those intentions, and in what timeframe. When it comes to the goal of safely reopening school buildings, below are examples of some key questions to consider by issue area, excerpted from the National Labor-Management Partnership's Guidance on Reopening Schools.

● Public Health and Safety
- What COVID symptoms screening measures make sense for the school community (e.g. temperature monitoring, mandatory testing, etc.), and what are the logistics of doing them?
- What will happen when a student or staff member tests positive? How will they be isolated and their contacts tracked? What number or scenario would trigger a need to close a school and move back to online instruction again?
- If implemented, how much will the increased health and safety recommendations cost, and how will any cost increases be funded?

● School Operations Logistics
- Do adjustments need to be made to the school calendar?
- To increase social distance within the school setting, what are the logistics involved with reducing class size? How much will any proposed increase to physical space or personnel cost, and how will those cost increases be funded?
- What are the times of day when students congregate, and what changes do we need to make to decrease the number of students together in common spaces?

● Teaching & Learning
- What are the district's expectations for in-person instruction, online face-to-face instruction, and independent learning time?
- To what extent were the technological solutions implemented in the Spring effective in meeting the needs of educators, students, and families?
- What are the expectations for educators about following curricular guides and meeting grade-level standards during emergency remote learning?

● Equity & Family Needs
- In what ways should we shift our usual choices and decision-making to address racial equity during conversations about re-opening public school buildings?
- How will we assess and meet students' and educators' personal technology needs? How will we meet 1:1 electronic device ratios?
- How will families' food needs be met? How can the food services most effectively switch back and forth between in-school and remote models?

● Social-Emotional Health
- How will educators be trained to identify students struggling with trauma, and ensure they receive support?
- What will a trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive school culture look like in each school building?
- How will we ensure sufficient specialized instructional support personnel to address students' needs?