

August 18, 2020

Chairmen and members of the Senate and House Education Committees:

In preparation for this week's hearing we compiled an overview of resources and tools that the Departments of Health (DOH) and Education (PDE) have offered educators drawing on current data, science and research associated with COVID-19 and using the feedback provided by education leaders during regularly scheduled virtual meetings. We, collectively or individually, have met with all district, LEA and professional education organization leaders through at least three cycles of virtual meetings since June 2020 and have issued guidance and recommendations in responsive to needs expressed by school leaders.

Over the summer, PDE and DOH have developed several pieces of guidance for school communities to use in preparing for the reopening of school buildings for the 2020-21 school year. All of these resources are housed on the [Reopening Pre-K-12 Schools in PA](#) section of PDE's website and includes links to guidance and resources to assist schools in safely planning and preparing for the school year.

At the beginning of June, PDE released [Preliminary Reopening Guidance](#), which was followed by the [Research Report by Mathematica](#) in late June. Subsequently, PDE and DOH jointly released [Public Health Guidance](#) in mid-July.

Schools must submit their locally approved [Health and Safety Plans](#) to PDE to illustrate how they will be providing instruction, whether in-person, online or using a blended – or hybrid – approach. The guidance includes a downloadable template to assist schools. The [Emergency Instructional Time](#) guidance provides information regarding meeting the 180 instructional day and 900/990 hours required for the 2020-21 school year, which also includes a [template](#).

In August, the Departments of Education and Health also collaborated to provide recommendations to school leaders grounded in data and existing public health conditions across Pennsylvania. This included a tool to aid school leaders in making decisions about [Instructional Models for the 2020-21 School Year](#). While these public health-based metrics can be used to inform reopening decisions, they will also be useful in decision-making as conditions change throughout the school year. Further, the departments released [Recommendations on Procedures When Responding to COVID-19 Cases](#) and a [Chart to Process Symptoms of Students or Staff](#) to assist in managing potential cases in school communities. DOH also released specific guidance on [School Health Resources](#) for school nurses and continues to engage school nurse stakeholders to ensure they have the most current information available. It is important to note, these public health tools for schools were designed to be used in collaboration and consultation with public health staff at DOH or the local county or municipal health departments (CMHD).

Lastly, PDE has also been making other resources available to schools and educators to assist with this transition. Within the [Roadmap for Education Leaders](#), schools will find resources to support their school community. Resources include a toolkit of instructional delivery model planning, strategic deployment of staff, a guide for student and staff wellness, resources for prioritizing grade and content knowledge and standards, and tools for diagnostic assessment. New information and content will be added by our teams within the next week or so.



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The health and safety of our students, educators and school communities while providing (reasonable/responsible) continuity of educational opportunities are our highest priority. We look forward to meeting with the committees on Wednesday to discuss the upcoming school year amid the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rachel Levine MD".

Dr. Rachel Levine
Secretary of Health

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pedro A. Rivera".

Pedro A. Rivera
Secretary of Education