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UnidosUS Guiding Questions and Critical Action Items for School Reopenings

Long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put Latino* families, and other racial and ethnic minority groups, at increased risk of contracting COVID-19.¹ The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on the Latino community threatens to undermine the educational progress of more than 13 million Latino students and five million English learners in K-12 public schools.²

A recent survey by Latino Decisions found that a majority of Latino families in the United States are considering not enrolling their children in school due to the fear of COVID-19. Survey respondents also expressed inability to receive fully functional distance learning due to lack of internet access, devices, and updated software.³

About this Guide

As state education agencies and school districts continue to develop their school reopening guidance, UnidosUS shares a framework of guiding questions and S.A.F.E. critical actions adapted to serve the needs of all students and adults in the upcoming school year. UnidosUS recognizes that leadership at the state, district, and school levels have multiple considerations for reopening schools, including family outreach, physical and mental health, operations, access to technology, and academics.

Before states and districts implement their reopening plans, parents need to know the following information prior to sending their children back to school.

* The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race. This document may also refer to this population as "Latinx" to represent the diversity of gender identities and expressions that are present in the community.

Family Outreach and Information Sharing

- How has the state and/or district collected feedback from Latino and non-English-speaking families and used it to inform school reopening plans?
- Has the state and/or district made all public-facing resources available in languages other than English?
- Has the state and/or district leadership developed a public information campaign on school reopening plans and shared them via local Latino newspapers, Spanish-language radio, television station, and/or social media platforms?
- Will the district and/or school be offering virtual information sessions on reopening plans in languages other than English or providing translation services for non-English speaking households?
- Will the district and/or school be offering virtual information sessions for families during hours that accommodate parent/guardian work schedules?
- At the school level, will staff be conducting direct and personal outreach to families inviting them to school reopening virtual information sessions or related events?
- What procedures will school registrars be following to update student emergency contact information?
- Districts must also take the following into consideration: Many families do not communicate through email, educational language barriers that existed prior to the pandemic have been exacerbated, and some families may be worried about engaging virtually due to concerns related to citizenship status.

Scenario Planning: Staggered and Hybrid Models

- Does the state have a staggered or hybrid reopening plan?
 - Example of a staggered approach:
 - Phase I:** Traditional Summer Programs Reopen Date (Summer School) with options with or without in-person instruction
 - Phase II:** Fall On-Time Reopen Date or Early Calendar Start, again with options for traditional in-person instruction or limited in-person instruction with strict social distancing protocols
 - Example of hybrid approach:
 - Students are physically present in school on alternating schedules (may be based on days, weeks, last names, and other state-proposed methods).
- If districts are planning for hybrid reentries, how will schools determine which staff and students will be physically present in schools or attending classes virtually?
- Will there be schedules for students? Whether hybrid or staggered, will schedules be shared in all languages to keep students and the adults near them safe?

Monitoring and Responding to COVID-19 Cases in Schools

- How will districts and/or schools monitor students and employees for COVID-19 symptoms?
- Will teachers and staff have ongoing access to personal protective equipment (PPE) as well as training on proper usage?
- What is the school's plan for when there is a COVID-19 case at the school? Does the school have a COVID-19 crisis plan?
- How will children move safely throughout the facilities, including commonly used areas such as hallways, restrooms, stairwells, building entrances, gymnasiums, and cafeterias?
- Whether hybrid or staggered, will these protocols be shared in all languages to keep students and the adults near them safe?
- How will the school provide support to help students and their families recover from mental health issues stemming from COVID-19?

School Staffing

- What measures are schools taking to reduce class sizes, for example, additional hiring of teaching staff, as feasible, and converting cafeterias, libraries, gymnasiums, auditoriums, and outdoor areas into classroom space?
 - Does the school have enough teachers?
 - Is there enough space to hold all students in the classroom?
- How will trauma-informed and/or healing-centered engagement practices be provided for students, families, and employees remotely and/or in person?
 - Does the school have enough counselors, social workers, psychologists, and/or behavioral health professionals?
 - Does the district and/or school provide physical and mental health resources or supports for undocumented students and mixed-status families?
- Does the school have protocols for continuous disinfecting of doorknobs, counters, and other frequently touched surfaces throughout the school day?
 - Does the school have enough janitors for the increased need to disinfect school facilities?
- Will support staff, such as librarians, also provide support for family outreach efforts?

Teaching and Student Learning

- Have all teaching staff received social-emotional learning training and supports to better

support students in distance learning?

- Have all teaching staff, especially teachers of English learners, received additional supports and training in distance teaching?
- Has the district provided English learners with resources to continue developing and learning their first language?
- Will schools offer virtual tutoring and coaching in languages other than English?
- What additional supports will districts provide for English learners and students with disabilities?
- What type of physical exercise or elective classes will the school be providing?

Digital and Broadband Access for All Families

- Does the district and/or school have enough laptops or other learning devices for families who may need them?
 - Will additional learning devices, such as laptops, be provided for households with more than one school-age child?
 - If there aren't enough laptops, how will schools prioritize which students will receive laptops?
 - Will there be fees associated with loaner computers?
 - Will districts/schools require loaner computers to be returned at the end of the school year?
- Has the district and/or school provided training on programs such as Google Classroom or Zoom in languages other than English to facilitate remote learning for limited English proficiency households?
- Will there be designated staff available at the district and/or school level to provide technology support for families, including limited English proficiency households, when troubleshooting hardware and connectivity?
- How long will school hotspots and local internet providers provide connectivity supports and internet access for students during the pandemic?

Transportation Services

- Does the district have enough buses to transport children safely, especially students with disabilities, with social distancing measures in place?
- How will drivers or buses be used to support other essential functions (e.g., dropping off Wi-Fi hotspots, delivering food/resources to homeless youth, foster youth, and other vulnerable student groups)?
- How have school district leaders partnered with public transportation systems to ensure the safety of commuter students, in areas such as New York City and Washington, DC, where students depend heavily on public transportation?

Food Services

- How often will the district or school provide food services?
- How will students in staggered or hybrid schedules receive meals on days or weeks when they are not physically present in school?
- What will the school's new lunch practices look like (e.g., will students eat in classrooms)?
- How will the district ensure that students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch, homeless youth, and foster youth will continue to reliably receive meals throughout the school year?



S.A.F.E. Critical Action Items for State Education Agencies and School Districts

- **School Health**—Districts must prioritize both the physical and mental health of all students and school staff by implementing additional safety protocols to prevent, monitor, and respond to cases of COVID-19.
- **Access to Learning for All Students**—School leaders at all levels must develop comprehensive plans to provide high-quality instruction for English learners, safe access to transportation, and reliable technology access for all students regardless of whether the school is following a staggered or hybrid reopening model.
- **Food Security**—One out of three students who receive a free or reduced-price lunch are Latino.⁴ Regardless of the school reopening model, students who rely on school lunches should not experience a disruption in accessing meals.
- **Effective Family Communication**—States, districts, and schools must collaborate with families, prioritize language access in their reopening information-sharing campaigns, and allow space for all parents/guardians to meaningfully engage in the education of their children.

About Us

UnidosUS, previously known as NCLR (National Council of La Raza), is the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization. Through its unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an [Affiliate Network](#) of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico, UnidosUS simultaneously challenges the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos at the national and local levels.

For more than 50 years, UnidosUS has united communities and different groups seeking common ground through collaboration, and that share a desire to make our community stronger. For more information on UnidosUS, visit unidosus.org or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Racial & Ethnic Minority Groups," <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html> (accessed June 30, 2020)

² UnidosUS, "Latino Students & English Learners: Fast Facts 2020," http://publications.unidosus.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/2022/unidosus_fastfacts_latinostudentseels.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y (accessed June 30, 2020).

³ Latino Decisions, "The Impact of COVID-19 on Latino Families Views About Returning to School in the Fall, Results From the 2020 National Latino Family Survey," <https://latinodecisions.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Report-Parent-Survey-July-2020.pdf> (accessed July 17, 2020).

⁴ National Council of La Raza, "Profiles of Latino Health: Hispanic Participation in School Nutrition Programs," https://www.unidosus.org/Assets/uploads/Publications/Nutrition-Profiles/2015plh_issue10_72715.pdf (accessed July 17, 2020).