

Kansas City Regional Gating Criteria for Elementary, Middle and High Schools

The local public health officials in the greater Kansas City area offer these considerations for area school districts. The considerations are provided, recognizing that there are differences among school districts and areas of the region regarding exposure to and cases of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19).

Principles

- Local public health departments across metropolitan Kansas City recognize that each school district must make decisions regarding the opening and closing of in-person education in order to both keep their students and staff safe and to provide a high quality, equitable education for all students
- Reopening considerations provide a general framework for districts; each district will use this framework to meet its community's individual needs.
- The considerations are provided to help communities, districts, families/caregivers, and staff understand and articulate risks and benefits, which are inherent and inevitable when reopening schools during a pandemic.
- The information is based on the best available evidence, science, and best practices in both education and public health. As new evidence and best practices emerge, considerations may change, and flexibility will be key.
- Responding to this new and changing situation depends on the coordination and cooperation of students, staff, families/caregivers, and the community with the goal of creating and maintaining safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments. Until a sufficient percentage of the population is no longer at risk of COVID-19, school communities must work to protect one another by effectively implementing protective measures, such as wearing face coverings and maintaining a physical distance.
- It is important that school districts work closely with their local public health department to evaluate conditions and make appropriate decisions regarding the level of school offerings and closure. We intend to review these considerations on a monthly basis with our regional public health leaders.
- Gating criteria data will be updated on a weekly basis and will be reported by local public health departments and Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) and is expected to change often due to the presence of the disease, the variability in receiving test results and reporting and other factors. The geographies used for each district may vary. If a district determines that two or more of the criteria factors are one color, it is suggested that districts use the guidance for that color. If one in each color, the positivity rate should be used as a guiding factor for schools to modify their operations.

Information for the gating criteria has been informed from Johnson County Health and Environment, North Kansas City School District, Missouri Center for Public Health Excellence, Missouri DHSS/DESE, Delaware Department of Education, Kansas National Education Association and Children’s Mercy Kansas City.

	Green	Yellow	Red
Gating Criteria			
New Cases/100,000 population (change from a 2-week period)	Less than 50	51- 200	201 or more
% of Persons Testing Positive (Positivity rate) for the 2-week period	Less than 5%	5% - 10%	10% or more
Trend in Incidence Rate (change in 2-week period)	Steady or decreasing	Steady or increasing	Increasing
Instruction			
Elementary School	In-person instruction following safe opening principles	In-person instruction following safe opening principles	Remote
Middle/High School	In-person instruction following safe opening principles	Hybrid (combination of in-person and remote learning)	Remote

Extra and Co-Curricular Activities			
<p>Elementary School</p>	<p>In-person activities following safe operating principles.</p> <p>If allowed by school guidelines, spectator/audience should be distanced by household groups; masked both indoors and outdoors. Facilities should limit capacity to allow for 6’ physical distancing of ALL school-related events.</p>	<p>No all-school activities. Limit activities with accompanying safe operating principles including (but not limited to) masking and physical distancing.</p> <p>If allowed by school guidelines, spectator/audience should be distanced by household groups; masked both indoors and outdoors. Facilities should limit capacity to allow for 6’ physical distancing of ALL school-related events.</p> <p>Limited building visitor access with masks and physical distancing.</p>	<p>No extra-curricular activities</p>
<p>Middle/High School</p>	<p>In-person activities following safe operating principles.</p> <p>Spectator/audience should be distanced by household groups; masked both indoors and outdoors. Facilities should limit capacity to allow for 6’ physical distancing of ALL school-related events.</p>	<p>No high-risk activities.</p> <p>Limited building visitor access with masks and physical distancing.</p>	<p>No extra-curricular activities</p>

Transition between green, yellow or red levels may include additional data as identified by the district or local public health agency.

The superintendents have asked for information on considerations for when to close classrooms and individual schools. The following information summarizes input from Children's Mercy Kansas City and the Missouri Center for Public Health Excellence.

Considerations for closing a classroom should include

- Evidence of intra-classroom transmission of COVID-19.
- Evidence of ≥ 2 cases in the classroom with the inability of all parties to be masked and physically distanced (e.g., 6 feet apart)

In cases where a class is successfully cohorted and one student or staff in the classroom is positive and the other members of the classroom are deemed to be exposed by the local public health department, the school and local public health department may consider continuing to cohort the exposed group together for the 14-day quarantine period. No new introduction of students or staff would occur during this time. Ideally, this group would have a staggered entrance/ exit, limitations in movement around the school, and cancellation of extracurricular and extended day activities that would include mixing with other groups. The school may choose to enhance their typical screening for this group, and may choose to implement temperature checks, visual screening for signs and symptoms, and daily communication with parents/ caregivers regarding signs and symptoms of COVID-19. This strategy may be particularly useful for young children, for whom remote learning may not be feasible and transmission risk may be reduced.

Alternatively, in children for whom remote learning may not be feasible due to limitations in technology and resources, the school may choose to provide an area where students can safely quarantine but continue to participate in virtual learning on-site. This would entail keeping students masked and physically distanced but allow for the provision of technology and resources to engage in a safe, virtual learning environment. These strategies should only be implemented for students requiring quarantine (i.e., exposed), not isolation (i.e., infected with COVID-19).

In cases where one student or staff in a classroom is positive, but no other students or staff have been deemed to be exposed by the local public health department, then the school does not need to close the classroom.

Considerations for closing a school should include

- Evidence of intra-school transmission of COVID-19 that cannot be curtailed by single or multiple classroom closure
- The rates of positive students and staff exceeds the rate of positive cases in the community
- Inability to provide in-person instruction due to ill or exposed teachers
- Inability to provide appropriate cleaning and custodial services due to ill or exposed custodial staff
- Shelter at home order as deemed by local public officials

If the school is closed, consider closure for 24-48 hours to allow for deep-cleaning and further contact investigation by the LPHA. A longer closure may be needed based on the circumstances. Both school and LPHA should be involved in the decision to re-open.

References and Resources

Missouri Center for Public Health Excellence

Minimum School Opening and Closing Recommendations June 24, 2020; <https://www.mocphe.org/>

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services/Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

<https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/COVID-MO-K12-Reopening-Guidance.pdf>

Johnson County Department of Health and Environment

Public Health Recommendations for Safe School Reopening; <https://www.jocogov.org/school-reopening-criteria>

North Kansas City School District

https://www.nkcschools.org/cms/lib/MO49000025/Centricity/domain/4/our%20district/Decision_Criteria_COVID-19.pdf

Children's Mercy Kansas City

<https://www.childrensmercy.org/siteassets/media/covid-19/guidance-for-school-re-opening-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.pdf>

Delaware Department of Education

https://www.doe.k12.de.us/cms/lib/DE01922744/Centricity/Domain/599/ddoe_returningtoschool_guidance_final.pdf

<https://myhealthycommunity.dhss.delaware.gov/locations/state>

National Federation of State High School Associations

Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities

https://www.nfhs.org/media/3812287/2020-nfhs-guidance-for-opening-up-high-school-athletics-and-activities-nfhs-smac-may-15_2020-final.pdf

Kansas National Education Association

<https://www.kneaweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Gating-Guidance-Indicators-Full.pdf>