

Communication Toolkit

Community expert-informed
communication guides and materials
to support safe, in-person learning during COVID-19
in Maryland school communities

Developed as part of the
Parents and Communities as Experts (PACE) study

Version 2
November 15, 2022

All subsequent versions of this toolkit will be provided at:
https://schoolhealth.jhu.edu/covid19_resources/pace-study/

If you have questions, contact us at **pacestudy@jhu.edu**





Purpose of this Toolkit

This toolkit includes practical, actionable resources and recommendations to support schools in communicating about COVID-19. The how-to guides, checklists, suggested messaging and materials emphasize the importance of collaboration between schools and families to support COVID-safe environments for in-person learning.

The guidance is based on recommendations from parents and other school community experts who participated in the Parents and Communities as Experts (PACE) Study as well as existing public health communication guidelines.

The PACE study engaged with community experts (parents, teachers, school health personnel, and other community members) to determine and understand families' perceptions of different public health recommendations related to COVID-19 in schools. Through a survey of over 500 parents/caregivers of public elementary or middle school children from 8 Maryland counties as well as 15 focus groups with parents, teachers and school staff, we learned what support is useful in navigating the return to in-person school, in receiving updates on school-based COVID-19 prevention strategies and in understanding guidance in the context of personal/family risk level.

Who should use this toolkit?

-  **Individuals and teams who are responsible for providing the school community with up-to-date health and safety information about COVID-19.**
 - Use the communication tips and customizable materials to supplement your current and future communications with the school community and provide clear and easy to find information.
-  **Other school staff and stakeholders who support parents and students attending in-person school.**
 - Advocate for your school's communication and/or leadership teams to use this toolkit.
 - Support parents and students in staying safe, healthy and informed by using the talking points and resources on pages 20- 22.

By using this toolkit, you can help parents and others in the school community feel supported and informed.

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Communication Guide

This is a practical guide for communicating effectively about strategies being implemented to maintain safe and healthy in-person learning during COVID and to support the school community in assessing COVID risk and making plans for maintaining individual, family and community health.

The guidance is based on recommendations from PACE Study community experts (parents, teachers, school health personnel, and other community members) of K-8th grade students as well as existing public health communication guidelines.

Stay prepared for a change in COVID-19 transmission levels

Does your school have an implementation and communication plan in place for COVID-19 prevention strategies if there's a change in transmission levels?

In response to a change in your county's community transmission levels (CDC Guidance) or a change in COVID-19 case rates at your school, you may need to alert the school community of updates on guidance and strategies to maintain safe and healthy in-person learning.

If there are changes, your school community may be actively seeking information about what's happening or will happen in your school. Be ready to provide accurate and credible information as early as possible. Be transparent about what is and is not known. Respond to the school community's concerns and let people know what practices the school is requiring or recommending and why.

CDC's Six Principles of Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication

- Be first
- Be right
- Be credible
- Express empathy
- Promote action
- Show respect

Support school community members in understanding their COVID-19 risk

Community risk levels may move up and down depending on several factors, and schools will need to communicate their response, if any, to the changing levels of severity and risk.

Individual/family risk levels should be considered and may also change over time. Support school community members in adopting and maintaining protective behaviors while decision-makers provide recommendations or policy changes needed to limit spread.

Encourage school community members to keep the following in mind:

- What is my level of risk?
- How can I act to protect myself and my loved ones?

Clearly communicate what behaviors people should adopt in response to changing COVID-19 conditions in their community by encouraging families to have a [COVID-19 Action Plan](#).

Action plans can help support clear decision-making, improved accountability, and shared responsibility while schools continuously balance between prevention strategies to prioritize student health and safety and minimizing disruption to in-person school operations.

Schools are uniquely positioned to support community members in assessing their COVID-19 risk and making plans to maintain individual, family, and community health.

Follow effective communication recommendations

Whether you are creating flyers, social media graphics, emails, or any other communication material, following guidelines for effective communication can help keep school community members engaged and well-informed. Communicate to emphasize the importance of staying vigilant and continuing or re-instating protective behaviors.

Effective communication is especially important when the community is experiencing fatigue and overwhelm from COVID-19-related life disruptions.

Barriers and challenges related to communication indicated by PACE community experts included:

- Lost trust and credibility
- Lack of transparency about how and why strategies were implemented
- Lack of consistent and clear communication about strategies, possibly as a result of inconsistent implementation and enforcement across different schools within the same school system
- Confusion and uncertainty as a result of receiving mixed messages from the schools or systems
- Fatigue or overwhelm with quantity and duration of COVID-19 information and practicing guidelines

Anatomy of an Effective Communication Message

Command attention

Use words and/or visuals to emphasize something that's important to your school community.

Call to Action

Be clear about what the school community can do and what they are being asked to do.

Be consistent

Provide consistent information within a material and across different communication channels and to different audiences.

Cater to the head and to the heart

Appeal to emotions in addition to providing facts and information. Express empathy.

Communicate a benefit

Emphasize how your school community will benefit from what's being done in your school and/or what's being asked of them.

Create trust

Clearly present the source of the material, use trusted messengers, and be transparent and consistent.

WE CAN THRIVE TOGETHER
With in-person learning



COVID-19 has been challenging for us all. Thank you for making student safety a priority even when it's not easy. Please continue to support the COVID-19 guidelines in [school/district name] to help keep students safe, healthy and in school.

John Doe, Superintendent

Stay up-to-date on the COVID-19 guidelines in our schools:

- www.schoolwebsite.com/specificpage
- <https://www.facebook.com/specificschool>
- School newsletter

COVID-19 is here to stay.
Let's work together to keep kids safe, healthy, and in school.



Follow the Seven C's of Effective Communication to help address the barriers that school community experts reported.

PACE Community Expert Insights on Communication Recommendations

Seven C's of Effective Communication	PACE Community Expert Insights (based on surveys, focus groups, and pretesting)
Command Attention Use appealing visuals, key words, and design elements to help attract and hold your school community's attention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key words like "in-person learning" and "safety" were suggested to get parents' attention. • Some community experts noted that they stopped reading emails that used the same templates week after week.
Clarify the Message Include a key message that is clear, direct, and concise with words and images that are easy to understand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed messages and confusion were emphasized as a key barrier. • Transparency and clarity were suggested as ways to increase understanding/awareness and improve adherence.
Communicate a Benefit Emphasize how your school community will benefit from what's being done in your school and/or what's being asked of them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a clear justification for why and how policies and prevention strategies are being implemented was recommended. • Benefits that were emphasized included in-person learning for students' mental health, academics, and socialization.
Be Consistent Provide consistent information within a material and across different communication channels and to different audiences (parents, students, staff). Use the same words across materials and communication channels to avoid confusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of multiple communication channels were recommended since information is sometimes missed and different individuals rely on different sources for information. • Lack of consistency across information sources was emphasized as a major barrier.
Create Trust Clearly present the source of the material, use trusted messengers, and be transparent and consistent. Building and maintaining trust and credibility will help encourage the school community to read and heed the information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trusted messengers from within and outside the school system included health providers (eg. physicians), principals, superintendents, Chief Executive Officers, and public health professionals. • Personal messages from trusted sources resonated with community experts during message pretesting.
Cater to the Heart and Head Appeal to emotions in addition to providing facts and information to help improve communication. Express empathy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings of being tired, overwhelmed and "over it" with COVID-19 were common responses as well parents' concerns about students' social and emotional health.
Call to Action Be clear about what the school community can do and what they are being asked to do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge and awareness of the prevention strategies being implemented in schools were demonstrated in both survey and focus group findings among some community experts.

Tailor and test your messages and materials

Tailor communications to your school community to ensure they are culturally relevant and are addressing the current practices, attitudes, concerns, stigma, rumors and misinformation. Refer to the [PACE Study results report](#) for additional insights on PACE community experts attitudes and practices related to COVID-19 prevention strategies.

For example, the majority of community experts in the PACE study considered hand washing, ventilation, and in-school testing as both effective and acceptable strategies. Remind the school community of how these policies are being implemented to help build trust and confidence in the school's response and the commitment to student health and safety.

Creating opportunities for ongoing and open dialogue with school community members, versus one-way communication, can help ensure you are responding to the most current questions and concerns. Test the materials and messages with school community members before releasing them widely.

Use multiple communication channels

PACE Community experts recommended that multiple communication channels be used since information is sometimes missed, and different individuals rely on different sources for information.

The following channels were recommended by community experts:

- Two-way dialogue opportunities such as Town Halls
- Email
- School newsletters
- School websites
- Videos
- Letters
- Script-based messaging (eg. phone calls, text messages)
- Social media (especially for students who interact peer-to-peer)

Communication Checklist

for COVID-19 Communication in Schools

This checklist is a compilation of guidelines to help you develop and share important information and updates to your school community about strategies to maintain safe and healthy in-person learning during COVID.

Use this checklist to:

- Provide clear and concise guidance and information on what procedures your school is implementing.
- Provide easy to understand information so that students, parents/guardians, and school staff are clear on what practices are required or recommended to follow.

This checklist includes two parts:

1. Communication Strategy Checklist
2. Messaging and Materials Review Checklist

The checklist is based on recommendations from parents and other community experts of K- 8th grade students who participated in the PACE Study as well as existing public health communication toolkits cited later in this document.

Communication Checklist

Part I: Communication Strategy

General Communication about COVID-19

- ___ Provide COVID-19 updates through multiple communication channels that the school community can access reliably.
- ___ Be transparent and consistent.
- ___ Address the school community's current concerns and questions.
- ___ Dispel rumors, myths or misinformation in a manner that is understanding and not accusatory.
- ___ Provide justification for why and how recommended practices and policies are being implemented.
- ___ Provide families with resources for assessing their own risk and "action plan."

In Response to Changes in COVID-19 Community Transmission or School Case Rates

- ___ Explain what is being done to respond to the change.
- ___ Clearly communicate what is known and not known at the time.
- ___ Acknowledge feelings of fear and uncertainty, without elevating either.
- ___ Clearly indicate when new information is being communicated.
- ___ Indicate where to find the most up-to-date information on COVID-19 safety guidelines.

Communication Checklist

Part II: Message and Materials Review Checklist

Core Message

- ☐ The material contains a main message statement.
- ☐ The main message is at the top, beginning, or front of the material.
- ☐ The message uses an appropriate tone for your primary audience (eg. serious, empathetic, funny, encouraging).

Messenger

- ☐ It is clear who is delivering the message/a clear identity is provided (eg. school name, school logo, administrator name).
- ☐ The messenger is a trusted and credible source among your primary audience.

Visuals

- ☐ The material uses visual(s) to help get and maintain the attention of the audience.
- ☐ More than one standard template is used to help ensure the audience recognizes that the information is new.
- ☐ The visuals will avoid harm or being offensive to people who see it.
- ☐ The visuals appropriately reflect the cultures and demographics of the audience.

Call to Action

- ☐ The material includes at least one clear call to action for the primary audience (a specific action or behavioral recommendation you are asking the audience to take).
- ☐ The action you are asking the audience to take is reasonably easy or feasible to do.
- ☐ The material explains why the action or behavioral recommendation is important to the primary audience or the benefits to taking the action.
- ☐ The material clearly indicates how and where to get additional information, if needed.
- ☐ The material includes a date or time frame so that the audience knows the information is still relevant.

Risk

- ☐ The material explains the nature of the risk.
- ☐ The material addresses both the risks and benefits of the recommended behaviors.

Language

- ☐ Both the main message and the call to action use the active voice.
- ☐ The material includes only words the primary audience uses.

Materials Guide

In this section of the toolkit, we've provided you with links to:

- 1 Ready-to-use materials to support your school community
- 2 Materials to customize to your school system

The materials provided in this toolkit are grounded in the Health Belief Model. Using this framework, a persons' likelihood of practicing or supporting COVID-19 prevention strategies is based on their perceived benefits minus the perceived barriers to taking those actions.

As a result, the materials help address school community members' perceptions about COVID-19 susceptibility, benefits of prevention measures, barriers, and help build confidence in ability to maintain preventive behaviors.

All subsequent versions of this toolkit will be provided at:

https://schoolhealth.jhu.edu/covid19_resources/pace-study/

Messaging and visuals in the materials featured in this toolkit may be updated at the link above based on community feedback and changing COVID guidance.

If you have questions or if a material format is not available that you would like to use, please contact us at **pacestudy@jhu.edu**

Campaign Materials:

Ready-to-use materials to support your school community

**Emphasize the collaboration between schools and families
in staying healthy and safe from COVID-19**

**Download the ready-to-use campaign materials
at this link**



Note: The materials featured in this toolkit may be updated at the links above based on community feedback and changing COVID guidance.

Campaign Materials:

Ready-to-use materials to support your school community

Provide families with a tool to assess their COVID-19 risk level and encourage a plan for protecting health when there are changes in community transmission levels.

Download the COVID-19 Action Plan at this link
Available in Spanish/ Disponible en Español

Your Family COVID-19 Action Plan

COVID-19 is here to stay. Every family is different. It is important to assess your household's risk, and know what to do to keep your family safe, especially when COVID-19 rates change. Talk to your doctor to determine your risk.

CONSIDER YOUR HOUSEHOLD'S COVID-19 RISK

Is your household at higher risk for severe illness?

Those at higher risk need to take extra precautions. You are at higher risk if you:

- Have a weakened immune system or an underlying health condition
- Are age 50 or older

How much COVID-19 is in your community? More COVID-19 in your community means higher risk of someone in your household being infected. Find out the COVID-19 level in your community by visiting the [CDC website](#).

PLAN AHEAD

COVID-19 vaccination is the best way to stay safe at home and at school!

PLAN AHEAD AT HOME

- Keep at-home test kits on hand in case of symptoms or an exposure
- Keep quality masks (e.g., KN95) on hand

PLAN AHEAD AT SCHOOL

- Update your contact information so school can contact you if your child is ill
- Know where to find your school's COVID-19 information and rules
- Know who to contact if your child tests positive

PROTECT YOUR HOUSEHOLD

Take steps to protect your household depending on the COVID-19 level in your community:

Low Community COVID-19 Level	Medium Community COVID-19 Level	High Community COVID-19 Level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay up to date with vaccinations Avoid contact with people who have or might have COVID-19 Follow recommendations for what to do if you have or are exposed to COVID-19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue green level actions PLUS Consider masking or testing before spending time with individuals at high risk for severe COVID-19 If you are at high risk for severe COVID-19, wear a high-quality mask when indoors in public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue green and yellow level actions PLUS Wear a high quality mask indoors in public If you are high risk, consider avoiding non-essential public indoor activities

GET TESTED

Remember, stay home and TEST if you are experiencing any of these symptoms:

- Fever (100.4 F or more)
- Chills, or shaking chills
- Difficulty breathing, shortness of breath
- Loss of taste or smell
- Muscle aches or body aches
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Nausea, vomiting
- Headache
- Nasal congestion or runny nose

Su Plan de Acción Familiar Contra El COVID-19

EL COVID-19 está aquí para quedarse. Cada familia es diferente. Es importante evaluar el riesgo de su hogar y saber qué hacer para mantener a su hogar saludable, especialmente cuando el nivel del COVID-19 cambie. Hable con su doctor para determinar su nivel de riesgo.

CONSIDERE EL RIESGO DE SU HOGAR PARA CONTRAER EL COVID-19

¿Hay alguien en su hogar con mayor riesgo de enfermarse gravemente del COVID-19?

Las personas con mayor riesgo deben tomar precauciones adicionales. Está en mayor riesgo si usted:

- Tiene un sistema inmunitario debilitado o una condición de salud subyacente
- Tiene 50 años de edad o más

¿Cuánto COVID-19 hay en su comunidad? Entre más COVID-19 haya en su comunidad, mayor es el riesgo de que alguien en su hogar se infecte. Descubra el nivel de COVID-19 en su comunidad visitando el sitio [web de los CDC](#).

PLANEÉ CON ANTICIPACIÓN

La vacunación contra el COVID-19 es la mejor manera de mantenerse seguro en la casa y en la escuela!

PLANEÉ EN CASA

- Tenga a la mano kits de prueba en el hogar en caso de síntomas o exposición
- Tenga a la mano mascarillas de calidad (p. ej., KN95)

PLANEÉ EN LA ESCUELA

- Actualice su información de contacto para que la escuela pueda comunicarse con usted si su hijo(a) está enfermo(a)
- Sepa dónde encontrar la información y las reglas sobre el COVID-19 de su escuela
- Sepa a quién contactar si su hijo da positivo

PROTEJA SU HOGAR

Tome medidas para proteger a su hogar según el nivel del COVID-19 en su comunidad:

Nivel de COVID-19 en la comunidad BAJO	Nivel de COVID-19 en la comunidad MEDIO	Nivel de COVID-19 en la comunidad ALTO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manténgase al día con sus vacunas Evite el contacto con personas que tengan o puedan tener COVID-19 Siga las recomendaciones sobre qué hacer si tiene o está expuesto al COVID-19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue las medidas del nivel verde ADemás: Considere usar una mascarilla o hágase la prueba antes de pasar tiempo con personas con alto riesgo Si tiene un alto riesgo de contraer COVID-19 grave, use una mascarilla de alta calidad cuando esté en lugares públicos cerrados 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue las medidas del nivel verde y amarillo ADemás: Use un cubrebocas de alta calidad cuando esté en espacios públicos cerrados Si tiene alto riesgo, considere evitar actividades públicas no esenciales en espacios cerrados

HÁGASE LA PRUEBA

Recuerde, quédese en casa y HÁGASE LA PRUEBA si siente alguno de estos síntomas:

- Fiebre o escalofríos
- Dificultad para respirar (sentir que le falta el aire)
- Pérdida reciente del olfato o el gusto
- Dolores musculares y corporales
- Tos
- Dolor de garganta
- Náuseas o vómitos
- Dolor de cabeza
- Congestión o moqueo

Note: The materials featured in this toolkit may be updated at the links above based on community feedback and changing COVID-19 guidance.

Customizable Materials

This materials guide will show you how to customize campaign materials to your school system's needs using the provided templates in Canva.



Check with your school system's communication team and/or leadership about guidelines for distribution of materials or information to your school community.

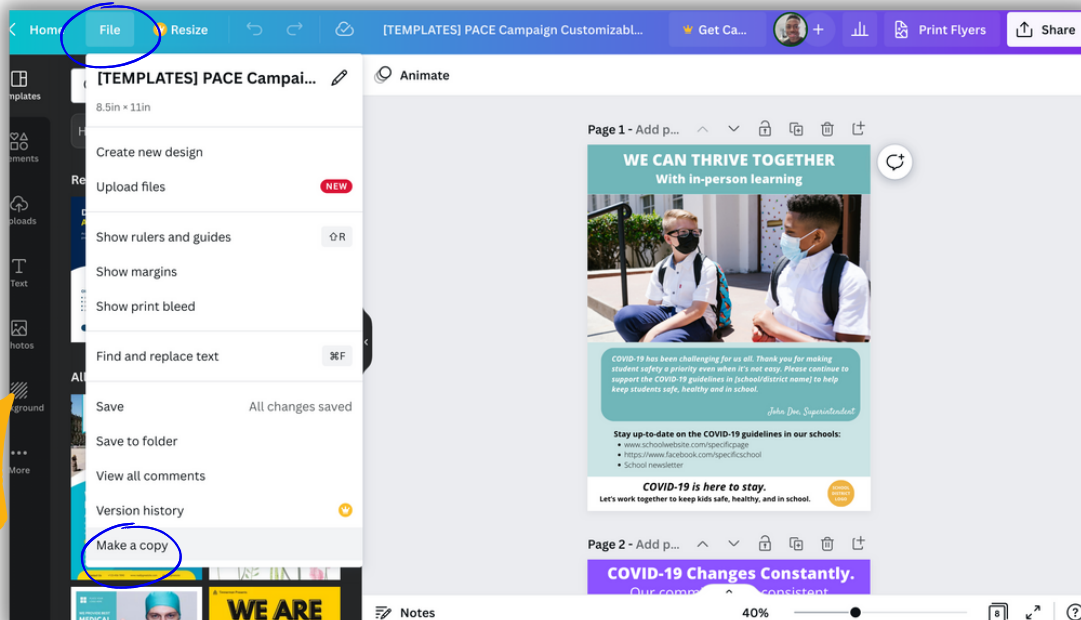
Canva is an online design and publishing tool.
It is free and easy to use.

STEP 1: Make a **FREE** Canva account (www.canva.com). Pro accounts will give you more access to photos and features, but all the materials in this guide can be customized with a free account.

STEP 2: When you access the customizable materials using the links in the preceding pages, the first thing you should do is **MAKE A COPY** to save to your account and edit. **Please do not edit the master files.**

STEP 3: Graphics are in files with multiple pages. After you customize, download the file you want. To specify which pages to download, go to 'Download'. Toward the bottom of the menu, go to the drop-down that says "Select Pages" and **select the pages you want to download.**

Make a copy to your Canva account before you customize



Campaign Materials:

Customize to your school system

Use a trusted messenger approach

How to Customize this Material

Use this photo or choose a different one.

This is a frame. You can drag a new photo on top and it will automatically resize.

Replace the text with a quote from a trusted leader.

Add your school system's name and the places where the school community can find up-to-date health and safety measures.

WE CAN THRIVE TOGETHER
With in-person learning

COVID-19 has been challenging for us all. Thank you for making student safety a priority even when it's not easy. Please continue to support the COVID-19 guidelines in [school/district name] to help keep students safe, healthy and in school.

John Doe, Superintendent

Stay up-to-date on the COVID-19 guidelines in our schools:

- www.schoolwebsite.com/specificpage
- <https://www.facebook.com/specifichschool>
- School newsletter

COVID-19 is here to stay.
Let's work together to keep kids safe, healthy, and in school.

SCHOOL SYSTEM LOGO

This is a placeholder. With appropriate approvals, add your school, school system, or organization logo here.

Choose your size (s), and customize this material using Canva:

- Flyer/handout (8.5" x 11" - **page 1** ([English](#)) ([Español](#)))
- Posters (18" x 24") - **page 1** ([English](#)) ([Español](#)))
- Facebook Graphic - **page 1** ([English](#)) ([Español](#)))

Make a copy first.
Please do NOT edit the master files.

Campaign Materials:

Customize to your school system

Use a peer-to-peer communication approach

How to Customize this Material

Upload a photo of a family from your school, with their permission. This is a frame. You can drag a new photo on top and it will automatically resize.

Replace the text with a quote from a parent or caregiver in your school community.

Add your school system's name and the places where the school community can find up-to-date health and safety measures.



This is a placeholder. With appropriate approvals, add your school, school system, or organization logo here.

Choose your size(s), and customize this material using Canva:

- Flyer/handout (8.5" x 11") - **page 3** ([English](#)) ([Español](#))
- Poster (18" x 24") - **page 3** ([English](#)) ([Español](#))
- Facebook Graphic - **page 3** ([English](#)) ([Español](#))

Make a copy first.
Please do NOT edit the master files.

Campaign Materials:

Customize to your school system

Provide a
community
transmission
level update

How to Customize this Material

Add your county name

Choose the "high", "medium" or "low" material at the link at the bottom of this page based on the current transmission level in your county according to the CDC.

Include the date of your communication

Add your school system's name and the places where the school community can find up-to-date health and safety measures.

UPDATE

The COVID-19 transmission level in [county] has changed to **MEDIUM**

Health, safety, and in-person learning are our priorities and your support matters.

Here's what you can do:

- Have a **COVID-19 Action Plan**: Assess your child's and family's risk level and know what to do to help keep everyone safe.
- Update your contact information so the school can contact you if needed.
- Know what you need to do if your child or someone in your family tests positive.

CDC's Current COVID-19 Guidance for Students
(as of October 19, 2022)

- If exposed to COVID-19, wear a mask for at least 10 days after exposure.
- Test for COVID-19 after exposure or if symptoms are present.
- Isolate after testing positive for COVID-19.
- If positive for COVID-19, wear a face mask for at least 5 days after completing the isolation period.

Stay up-to-date on flu and COVID-19 vaccinations.

Learn more about the COVID-19 safety measures in our school system at:

- www.schoolwebsite.com/specificpage
- <https://www.facebook.com/specificschool>
- School newsletter

COVID-19 is here to stay.
Let's work together to keep kids safe, healthy, and in school.

SCHOOL SYSTEM LOGO

The CDC guidance indicated in this poster is up-to-date as of October 2022 and may change over time.

This is a placeholder. With appropriate approvals, add your school, school system, or organization logo here.

Choose your size(s), and customize this material using Canva:

- Flyer/handout (8.5" x 11") - **page 4, 5, or 6** ([English](#)) ([Español](#))
- Poster (18" x 24") - **page 4, 5, or 6** ([English](#)) ([Español](#))
- Facebook Graphic - **page 4, 5, or 6** ([English](#)) ([Español](#))

Make a copy first.
Please do NOT edit the master files.

Talking Points and Messages

Support parents and others in your school community in feeling supported and informed.

You may want to communicate to your school community about specific prevention strategies (eg. masking, COVID testing, and vaccination) or guidance. The following are examples of talking points and messages modified from public health organization resources (pg. 22) **that address concerns and challenges raised by PACE school community experts.**

CDC Community Transmission Levels

- COVID-19 Community Level is a CDC framework to monitor COVID-19, a measure that takes into consideration hospitalizations, hospital capacity, and cases within a community. This approach is designed to help keep people safer from severe COVID-19. The CDC makes recommendations based on COVID-19 Community Level, and encourages local decision-makers, like schools, to use it to inform policies and encourages community members to use it to assess their own risk.

COVID-19 Safety at School after Changes in CDC Guidance

- The latest change in CDC's guidance does not necessarily make schools less safe, but it does shift the responsibility of risk reduction onto students and their families. Parents may need to take more initiative in determining when to ask their kids to adopt additional safety measures at school.

In-person Learning

- In-person learning is critical for the educational and social development of students of all ages. Ensuring that schools open and operate in a manner that prioritizes the health and safety of students, teachers, school staff, their families, and the community is a priority.
- In addition to following local and school requirements and getting vaccinated if eligible, children can protect themselves and others from contracting and spreading COVID-19 by wearing a well-fitting mask, washing their hands, physical distancing, staying home if they are feeling sick, and getting tested if they were exposed to the virus or are symptomatic.

Talking Points and Messages

Wearing Masks

- School systems may or may not require students and school personnel to wear masks, and those policies vary by jurisdiction. Regardless of state, local, or school policy, teachers, students, and other individuals can choose to wear masks to safeguard their health.
- Students can protect themselves and others by wearing high-quality, well-fitting masks in high-risk situations.

Recognize symptoms

- Recognize the symptoms of COVID-19 (coughing, fever, shortness of breath) in your child. Seek medical advice by first calling your health facility/provider and then take your child in, if advised. Remember that symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough or fever can be similar to those of the flu, or the common cold, which are a lot more common.
- If your child is sick, keep them home from school and notify the school of your child's absence and symptoms. Request assignments so that students can continue learning while at home. Explain to your child what is happening in simple words and reassure them that they are safe.

Protecting Kids and Family Members

- Kids remain at very low risk of severe disease from COVID-19, but it's still a possibility. Getting infected also comes with the chance of spreading the virus to more vulnerable family members and developing long COVID symptoms.

Vaccination

- A vaccine is the best way to protect your child from COVID-19 – all available COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective against severe illness, hospitalization, and death due to COVID-19.
- Talk to your health care provider if you have questions – it's perfectly normal to have questions about your child's care. Talk with your child's clinician to address specific questions.

Resources for Talking Points, Messages, and Checklists

The following resources provide recommended talking points, messaging you can use during communications as well as checklists for school staff, parents, and students.

Topics covered include, but are not limited to:

- Masking
- COVID-19 testing
- Variants
- In-person learning and creating safe environments
- Age-specific health education
- Coping with stress
- Pediatric vaccinations

Public Health Collaborative

Answers to Tough Questions

<https://publichealthcollaborative.org/faq/>

American Academy of Pediatrics

COVID-19 Guidance for Safe Schools and Promotion of In-Person Learning

<https://www.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Vaccine Resource Hub

Talking Points and FAQs: New COVID-19 Guidance for Schools

<https://vaccinresourcehub.org/resource/talking-points-and-faqs-new-covid-19-guidance-schools-english-spanish>

Diverse, culturally relevant and accurate materials to educate and inform their community about COVID-19 and influenza vaccines

<https://vaccinresourcehub.org/resources>

Health and Human Services (HHS)

COVID-19 Public Education Campaign, School Communities Toolkit

<https://wecandothis.hhs.gov/resource/back-school-toolkit>

Communicating With Vaccine-Eligible Children and Parents

<https://wecandothis.hhs.gov/resource/communicating-children-and-parents>

Communication Guide and Checklist Sources

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Clear Communication Index.
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Health Communication Capacity Collaborative. How to Develop SBCC Creative Materials.
<https://thecompassforsbc.org/how-to-guide/how-develop-sbcc-creative-materials>

Public Health Ontario; Dalla Lana School of Public Health. Health communication message review criteria. Edition 2. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2012.
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O'Sullivan, G.A., Yonkler, J.A., Morgan, W., and Merritt, A.P. A Field Guide to Designing a Health Communication Strategy, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health/Center for Communication Programs, March 2003.
<https://sbccimplementationkits.org/demandrmnch/a-field-guide-to-designing-a-health-communication-strategy/>

Ready: Global Readiness for Major Disease Outbreak Response. Covid-19 Risk Communication and Community Engagement Toolkit for Humanitarian Actors ("RCCE Toolkit"). <https://www.Ready-initiative.Org/Covid-19-risk-communication-and-community-engagement-toolkit-for-humanitarian-actors/#Toggle-id-6>

Williams, J. R. (1992). The Seven C's of Effective Communication. Baltimore, MD: JHU/CCP presentation materials.

CONTACT US

If you have questions, comments, or suggestions about this toolkit or want to know more about the Parents and Communities as Experts Study, please contact us at pacestudy@jhu.edu



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