

SchoolWorks

On Wednesday, May 13, 2020, SchoolWorks hosted a free webinar, “**Pandemic: The Return to School Roadmap**,” featuring Juliette Cricket Heinze from Opportunity Labs and Dr. J. Scott Cascone, Superintendent of West Orange Public Schools. The Return to School Roadmap is available online [here](#), and a recording of the webinar is available on [SchoolWorks YouTube Channel](#).

During the widely-attended event, participants engaged with the panelists through a variety of questions that – unfortunately, due to time constraints – could not all be answered during the scope of the 30-minute session. SchoolWorks has partnered with Opportunity Labs to summarize participant questions and offer some responses through this companion document. We hope you find it useful!

Governance

Q: How can schools or districts collect feedback on the current experience (from parents/families and students), and use it to inform planning moving forward?

A: Districts or charter networks can create opportunities for parents/families to share feedback about their child(ren)’s experiences and needs by using an online survey tool or a virtual forum. Surveys can be used to gather valuable data about what has been effective for students during these unprecedented times, as well as grant space for parents/families to share concerns about, and ideas for, the Return to School. During a virtual forum, school leaders and parents can hear others’ concerns and exchange ideas.

There are a number of frameworks available to assess a school’s, district’s, or network’s approach to remote learning and Return to School (including SchoolWorks [Remote Learning Plan Rubric](#), and Opportunity Labs’ [Return to School Roadmap](#)) that can be used to create community specific surveys.

Q: Which school stakeholders should contribute to school-level planning?

A: For districts and charter networks, Opportunity Labs recommend that each district create a Return to School Committee (including the Chief Operating Officer, Chief Academic Officer, Head of Facilities, Head of Human Resources, and Head of Student Health), as well as a representative from each school in the district or network).

Similarly, each school within the district or network should also have a Return to School Committee that includes members of the school’s leadership team, department heads, and student support team (such as guidance counselors and social workers), as well as nurses, janitorial, and maintenance staff.

The district, network, and/or school also should make sure there is family/parent representation at various levels of the planning process.

Q: What role can/will parents play in a safe Return to School?

A: Parents/caregivers play an essential role in a safe Return to School. First and foremost, it is essential for teachers and staff to frequently communicate with families regarding the physical and mental health needs of students and others within the household, so that, where needed, the school can assist in referring appropriate supports and resources. Parents are a vital source of information that schools can utilize to better support their students. Maintaining regular communication with school representatives will also allow school personnel to collaboratively problem solve with families when needed. Reinforcing proper health and hygiene practices within the home will help students demonstrate those routines and skills when in the school building. Finally, providing ongoing support for students during intermittent and prolonged periods of remote learning (particularly if staggered or rotating school schedules are put into effect, or if a family is self-quarantined due to exposure to the virus) will also be necessary.

Q: How can school nurses help support a safe Return to School?

A: School nurses will also play an integral role in the safe Return to School. As primary liaisons for physical and mental health of all individuals in our buildings, their leadership and participation on planning committees will help ensure that there are proper protocols to safeguard against continued spread of the virus, while supporting the proper care for staff and/or students in the case of sickness or injury that may be unrelated to COVID-19. School nurses can also support other school personnel in sharing and reinforcing health behaviors and information to prevent the further spread of the virus.

Q: What suggestions do you have for contingency planning, given uncertainties regarding when we will be returning to school?

A: SchoolWorks and Opportunity Labs recommend that districts, charter networks, and schools engage in rigorous planning during the Spring and Summer of 2020 to address a safe Return to School. Districts and charter networks also should engage in planning around different community-spread scenarios wherein short- and long-term remote learning needs to resume during periods of brief or extended school closures into the 2020-21 school year or beyond, as well as for individual students who are health-compromised. The logistics and details of these plans should support fluid transitions between both statuses, with the goal of maximizing supports for students and their families while maintaining continuity of instruction.

Q: Would the Return to School Roadmap be appropriate for use in a private school setting?

A: Yes, the Return to School Roadmap is appropriate for a variety of school settings, including use in private schools. As with public schools, Opportunity Labs recommends that schools use the Roadmap as a framework that can be customized to meet the unique needs of each community. Private schools, given their unique governance model, may also consider networking with school associations that support private and independent schools in order to share effective practices.

Instruction:

Q: How might we better help schools present their instructional vision for this Fall rather than focus on the operational constraints of a re-entry plan?

A: The current situation has resulted in a need and opportunity to both reassess operational logistics, as well as refine and pressure test an instructional vision in the context of remote learning. SchoolWorks recommends that schools, districts, and charter networks convene planning teams that collect data to assess the current state of a school's program and operations, set goals for program implementation and outcomes, and create a clear plan to attain those goals. In most schools, school-based improvement or leadership teams may provide an existing structure and process for completing this work. As previously stated, there are a number of tools that can be used to collect data to inform ongoing planning (such as [SchoolWorks Quality Criteria](#), or the [Remote Learning Plan Rubric](#) that is based on SchoolWorks Personalized Learning Framework).

Q: Do you envision a combination of in-school learning and remote learning?

A: Schools, districts, and charter networks should plan for likelihood that schools may need to close for short or extended periods of time during the 2020-21 school year, during which remote learning would be employed to minimize disruption to the learning process. In some cases, individual students and families will have to participate in remote learning opportunities in the event that a member of the household is exposed to the virus or tests positive (while the family self-quarantines).

Q: How can districts work with teaching associations to alter what a full-time teaching schedule looks like when blended or remote/distance learning become part of a teacher's professional expectations?

A: Every school, district, and charter network will need to consider the constraints and autonomies afforded to them through the teacher contracting process, and either work within those conditions, or, if possible, consider re-negotiating the terms of the contract. In either case, school, district, and teacher leaders will need to balance both the needs of their students and teachers when setting expectations for planning and delivery of instruction and student learning opportunities, as well as feedback to students and grading considerations.

Q: How can schools, districts, and charter networks keep students and parents engaged and productive if remote learning continues moving forward?

A: Schools, districts, and charter networks should assume that remote learning is likely to occur in some fashion in the future. There are a number of potential student and parent engagement strategies, each of which should be selected based on their alignment with program goals and initiatives. In all cases, schools and districts should consider the diversity of its community when choosing engagement strategies, including those that may impact accessibility of technology and devices, transportation services, differing family (and parental/caregiver) work schedules, as well as linguistic, racial, and socio-economic diversity that may impact a student's or family's ability to connect with, and communicate with, the school and students' teachers.

Facilities

Q: How will schools support students in maintaining appropriate distances when school reconvenes?

A: SchoolWorks and Opportunity Labs recommend that schools, districts, and charter networks follow guidance outlined by organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and State and local health officials with regard to physical distancing and cleaning surfaces, particularly where young children are involved. These include placing desks and student workstations at an appropriate distance, explicit teaching of protocols and expectations, and placing markers on the floor and other areas where students tend to gather in groups to help them discern appropriate distances.

School Operations:

Q: Are there any recommendations for effective and safe practices for student transportation?

A: SchoolWorks and Opportunity Labs recommend that schools, districts, and charter networks follow guidance outlined by organizations such as the CDC and State and local health officials.