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**Adventist Schools Reopening Fall 2020**

Reopening our Adventist schools during the COVID- 19 pandemic is fundamental to ensure the continuity of education as well as the development and well-being of our students. The following Adventist Risk Management recommendations are provided acknowledging that our understanding of the pandemic is changing rapidly. Schools should follow the guidelines, requirements and mandates of local, state, provincial and federal government. In addition, schools should adhere to the recommendations of the CDC, WHO and other reputable health governance. The safety of our students and staff is of paramount importance. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2020) state that, weighing the health risks of reopening K-12 schools in fall 2020 against the educational risks of providing no in-person instruction, we should prioritize reopening schools full time.

Schools that do not yet have COVID-19 identified in their community should begin as soon as possible with preparations to prevent the introduction and spread of the virus. Based on recommendations from The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (United States), World Health Organization and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (United Nations), and European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (European Union) Adventist Risk Management, Inc. is making the following recommendations:

* Work with the Conference office and local health departments to review, update, and implement emergency operations plans (EOPs). These plans should build existing Union policies. For schools which do not currently have an EOP, the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency has resources available on developing high-quality school emergency operations plans.
* Utilize resources from the World Health Organization and Adventist Risk Management to reinforce basic hygiene practices such as proper handwashing techniques, cough and sneeze etiquette, social distancing, and avoiding touching your face.
* Develop or strengthen partnerships with local health officials to facilitate day-to-day information sharing and maintain open dialogue with your Conference education department and Conference risk manager.
* Monitor absenteeism patterns among both students and staff to identify abnormal patterns. Review your attendance and sick leave policies and encourage both students and staff to stay home when sick.
* Create plans for alternative staffing if teachers are out sick, including cross-training staff members and identifying additional possibilities for substitute teachers.
* Work with your Conference education department to identify resources and methods for continuity of education in the event of a quarantine due to an outbreak in your area.
* Develop procedures for dealing with students and staff who become sick at school or who arrive sick. These individuals should be sent home as soon as possible and should be separated from the rest of the school until they can leave.
* Increase routine environmental cleaning of frequently touched surfaces in common areas and provide disposable wipes to teachers so classroom surfaces and items can be cleaned before each use.
* Partner with the Conference to create a communication plan to share relevant information with parents and community partners. Write drafts of essential communication pieces to have ready for use at the appropriate time. You may also use *the Communication Plan for Schools* resource available at. Adventistrisk.org/COVID19.

For schools in communities where COVID-19 has been identified, administrators should work with local health officials, in conjunction with the Conference, to determine if there has been possible exposure at the school. Consider canceling extracurricular group activities and large events and determine the appropriate time to enact your continuity of education plan.

Putting a plan in place prior to an outbreak in your community is the best way to respond quickly and effectively when an outbreak does occur. Communicating effectively with parents and constituents will help reassure them the school is actively engaged in prevention measures and prepared to deal with an outbreak if it should occur.

Executive Summary

* Students need to get back to school academically and psychologically (as safety allows)
* Parents need kids to get back to school psychologically and economically (as safety allows)
* The Adventist school system needs to reopen schools according to local guidelines for safety
* Adventist schools have the unique capacity if we act safely, swiftly and creatively to reopen while following the CDC guidelines and reputable health guidelines

Students Are Suffering -

* Research is showing that online school is not working for a vast majority of students
* Research indicates that children are suffering psychologically
* Research indicates that screen time stifles creativity, social adjustment and student mental health
* Research indicates that children are gaining weight and becoming less physically healthy
* Research indicates that at risk kids are at much more risk now that schools are closed and therefore their release from unhealthy homes, access to mentors and councilors and people who can spot abuse or neglect are no longer in their lives

Families Are Suffering

* The majority of the American workforce have children at home. Currently, parents are forced to either neglect their kids or neglect their work.
* Parents’ mental health and marriages are impacted negatively by the added stresses of trying to work full time, while teaching children full time.
* Suicides are up.

Adventist School System is at Risk of Declining Enrollments

* There is increasingly evidence that, where Adventist schools stay open and public schools close, there is a massive uptick in demand for Adventist education.
* There is increasing evidence that when Adventist schools go to online education, parents explore alternatives that are less expensive and may have more experience and resources to provide online education than their local Adventist school.

Adventists Can Respond Much More Effectively than Public Schools

The head of the Fairfax County, VA, public school system, one of the largest and most well regarded in the US, justified closing schools on the basis that they don’t have the physical space to provide the social distancing. Adventist schools do if they access all the Adventist assets –

* Sabbath school rooms in local Adventist churches
* Fellowship halls in local churches
* Sanctuaries in local churches
* Meeting rooms in local administrative offices (conference and union)
* Barns and other well-ventilated areas that church members loan to the church
* Forest school models – on church land or on properties loaned by church members
* We have communications teams who can prepare in advance for any negative press

Adventist Education allows for flexibility in a pandemic

* Schools in the AAA accreditation cycle can request an extension
* Schools have flexibility in reporting 180-day attendance and scheduling the school day
  + acknowledging quality over quantity
  + acknowledging the definition of a school day will change with hybrid, distance and face-to-face models of instruction

Conclusion

* Students need to get back to school academically and psychologically as safety allows
* Parents need kids to get back to school psychologically and economically as safety allows
* The Adventist school system needs to reopen schools according to local guidelines for safety
* Adventist schools have the unique capacity if we act safely, swiftly and creatively to reopen while following the CDC guidelines

References:

Research is showing that online school is not working for a vast majority of students

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/schools-coronavirus-remote-learning-lockdown-tech-11591375078>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/05/us/coronavirus-education-lost-learning.html>

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/6/26/21304405/surveys-remote-learning-coronavirus-success-failure-teachers-parents>

Research indicates that children are suffering psychologically

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/covid-19s-impact-students-academic-and-mental-well-being>

<https://www.npr.org/2020/05/14/855641420/with-school-buildings-closed-children-s-mental-health-is-suffering>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7156240/>

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/312605/parents-say-covid-harming-child-mental-health.aspx>

Research indicates that screen time stifles creativity, social adjustment and student mental health

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6214874/>

<https://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/public-health/screen-time-children-health-research/>

<https://www.feelgoodcontacts.com/blog/are-screens-harming-childrens-creativity>

<https://childrenstreatmentcenter.com/technology-screen-time-and-childrens-mental-health/>

Research indicates that children are gaining weight and becoming less physically healthy

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/28/well/eat/children-summer-weight-gain.html>

<https://www.inquirer.com/health/coronavirus/coronavirus-covid-child-obesity-exercise-20200511.html>

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340288609_COVID-19_Related_School_Closings_and_Risk_of_Weight_Gain_Among_Children>

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-05-pounds-covid-.html>

Research indicates that at risk kids are at much more risk now that schools are closed and therefore their release from unhealthy homes, access to mentors and councilors and people who can spot abuse or neglect are no longer in their lives

<https://www.cwla.org/new-research-outlines-school-closing-impact-on-child-abuse-reporting/>

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/5/18/21262590/school-closures-coronavirus-child-maltreatment-florida>

<https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3601399>

[Advocating for Children During the COVID-19 School Closures pediatrics.aappublications.org › peds.2020-1440.full.pdf](https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2020/06/15/peds.2020-1440.full.pdf?download=true)

The majority of the American workforce have children at home. Currently, parents are forced to either neglect their kids or neglect their work.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/27/nyregion/coronavirus-homeschooling-parents.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/02/business/covid-economy-parents-kids-career-homeschooling.html>

<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/07/16/parents-say-school-reopening-plans-leave-them-without-any-good-options.html>

Parents’ mental health and marriages are impacted negatively by the added stresses of trying to work full time, while teaching children full time.

<https://www.healthline.com/health-news/fighting-family-burnout-during-the-covid-19-crisis>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

Suicides are up.

<https://academic.oup.com/qjmed/article/doi/10.1093/qjmed/hcaa202/5857612>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/media-spotlight/202006/are-we-facing-post-covid-19-suicide-epidemic>

<https://www.psypost.org/2020/07/suicide-rate-projected-to-increase-as-unemployment-jumps-from-coronavirus-outbreak-57210>

There is increasingly evidence that, where Adventist schools stay open and public schools close, there is a massive uptick in demand for Adventist education.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/07/14/public-vs-private-school-it-could-come-down-to-the-reopening-plan.html>

<https://lasvegassun.com/news/2020/jul/20/some-parents-turn-to-private-schools-to-get-kids-b/>

There is increasing evidence that when Adventist schools go to online education, parents explore alternatives that are less expensive and may have more experience and resources to provide online education than their local Adventist school.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/robertfarrington/2020/06/16/is-the-decline-of-private-k-12-schools-imminent/#e9c6a344b532>

<https://www.cato.org/covid-19-permanent-private-closures>

Outdoor education and classrooms – on school or church land or on properties loaned by church members

[https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/17/nyregion/coronavirus-nyc-schools-reopening-outdoors.html](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nytimes.com%2F2020%2F07%2F17%2Fnyregion%2Fcoronavirus-nyc-schools-reopening-outdoors.html%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR3gfLyLbsurSf98Dx-2C1zgXtLPN-3V59-OOBAKkPShXnCvepjiYeUwewg&h=AT19I9xMzMcq3cUwva4KK-zUsCsv1FeQE69tDp2tQ9HYdoL5GaTyGJNTySfFXJ7wrGoWCAHpWckxQGITg1_UO_LjJSpffoLrKioP_wiOByo0vPoeMWh5tgXAb3q-lX0QmiZE47fc_T925Q2J2WeuJ-29zIs)

<https://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/District_Dossier/2020/06/outdoor_classrooms_coronavirus.html>

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/07/school-openings-across-globe-suggest-ways-keep-coronavirus-bay-despite-outbreaks>

<https://www.greenschoolyards.org/outdoor-infrastructure>

Harvard Global Health Institute

Click link for map, framework and up-to-date statistics via state and county.

<https://globalepidemics.org/key-metrics-for-covid-suppression/>

ARM Safety Guidance

<https://adventistrisk.org/en-us/safety-resources/information-regarding-coronavirus>

ARM Return to School Guidance

<https://adventistrisk.org/getmedia/f9cc3af5-c8ba-42fe-ba16-d352f04a63a6/ifs-arm-covid-19-prevention-and-planning-resources-for-schools-en?ext=.pdf>

\*NAD acknowledges the variety of high-quality options available including Griggs International Academy and our approved distance education schools