

COVID-19

SCHOOL FACILITIES IMPLICATIONS FOR COVID RESPONSE

April 2020

INTRODUCTION

When the current wave of cases has subsided, social distancing measures will relax and, eventually schools will reopen. There is no guarantee or even strong likelihood that an effective treatment, prophylaxis, or vaccine will be available or widely deployed at that point. Schools will reopen with the strong possibility of subsequent waves of infection as strong or stronger than the wave we are currently experiencing. Schools will continue to play an active role in the public health fight against such subsequent waves by developing and implementing social distancing protocols and effective protocols for responding to infections in the school community. These ongoing public health requirements have implications for the school district's facilities. This document tries to anticipate some of those implications and to note where available bond dollars could be put to use.

PREVENTING INFECTION

The following questions/suggested steps are derived from CDC guidance available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools-faq.html>

- Does each school site have adequate facilities to permit students to engage in regular hand washing throughout the day, including between classes and during classes? Should, for example, additional hand washing stations be added throughout the campus, including inside classrooms?
- Have actions been taken to reduce contact with high-touch surfaces? For example, have doors and elevators been automated?
- Have classrooms been rearranged to limit the spread? For example, have desks been rearranged so that they are further away from each other and all face the same direction?
- Have facilities been assessed for the viability of reducing class-size and minimizing contact between groups of students? Activating any surplus property available to use as additional instructional facilities may facilitate this.
- Can the District's HVAC system be reconfigured to create less contagion risk in classrooms?
- Are facemasks widely available at locations throughout each campus? Are there ways to integrate their production into the curriculum? Are there appropriate materials already available?
- Evaluate the potential for self-decontaminating or anti-viral coatings for high touch surfaces (see, e.g., <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4818485/>). To the extent that high-touch surfaces (playground equipment, desks, door handles, elevator buttons, etc.) can be treated with a coating that is less hospitable to the virus, the cost of regular cleanings may be decreased and moved from the general fund to the bond fund.
- Has the District begun to assess the supplies needed for frequent disinfection of high-use areas and to assess the supply chain to ensure such supplies will be available on a continuing basis?

- Has the District identified the staffing levels necessary to provide for the cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas at each site multiple times per day and to identify potential funding sources for this ramp-up?
- Are there protocols for the disinfection of equipment and supplies and does the District have adequate staffing to implement them? What kinds of disinfection equipment could keep janitorial staff safe and make the disinfection process more efficient?
- Are the health facilities at each school designed to prevent crowding and to permit distancing of potentially infected students?
- Should testing (both for infection and immunity) eventually be available at school sites and what kind of infrastructure/staffing would be necessary to implement this? Note that the CDC hasn't yet suggested this approach.
- Do school health staff have the necessary equipment and training to address a potential COVID-19 case? Assess supply chain, discuss with public health officials.

RESPONDING TO AN INFECTION

The CDC has recommended that school sites shut immediately when an infection has been detected at a school site both to stop person-to-person transmission and to conduct a deep cleaning of the site to prevent surface-to-person transmission. To the extent that contact-tracing permits immediate identification of potentially infected students and staff, it may be helpful to have an auxiliary facility that can be used as a temporary site while a primary site is being disinfected.

Are information technology systems designed to quickly communicate relevant information, including:

- disinfection protocol failures
- equipment needs
- potential infections
- individual school site closures
- quarantines

available, in-place and functional? Are those systems integrated with local, state, and national public health systems, as necessary?

CONCLUSION

It is probable that schools will reopen while the threat of COVID-19 hangs over us and will need to take such measures as are possible to prevent students and staff from spreading the disease. Schools will also need to stand ready to respond decisively when an infection is detected. Some of these preparations may consist of changes or improvements to school facilities that could be paid for from bond proceeds.

To discuss possible projects and funding sources, please contact:



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