



Department of
Education

Family Resource Guide

Created: July 22, 2020

Over the past several months, the strength, perseverance, innovation, and understanding of parents, families, guardians, and caregivers in the face of the unprecedented challenges of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, has been truly inspiring.

As we come to the beginning of new school year, we know that parents, families, guardians, and caregivers have many questions about what the upcoming year will look like.

The first priority of the Tennessee Department of Education is the health and safety of Tennessee students, teachers, and staff. Decisions to reopen schools and to provide critical school-based services to students over the coming year are made locally by local school officials in consultation with health experts.

COVID-19 Quick Tips

COVID-19 can look different in communities and people. Take steps to protect yourself, your children, and others.

Find additional information on protecting yourself and preventing the spread of COVID-19:

- How to Protect Yourself
- Preventing COVID-19 Spread in Communities
- How COVID-19 Spreads

Please be sure to watch your child and all of those living in your household for any signs of COVID-19. Notify your school when your child or someone in your household has symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19.

Supporting Children in Understanding COVID-19

While there are many things you can do to support your child in understanding the COVID-19 outbreak, start with the basics.

- Take time to talk with your child or teen about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.
- Reassure your child or teen that it is ok if they feel upset, uncertain, or unsure. Share with them productive ways that you deal with your own stress and get help for them if needed.
- Try to keep up with regular routines. If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

Free Resources for Families

- **Early Literacy Resource:** A free resource for students pre-K through 2nd grade to build foundational skills and support early literacy
- **PBS Learning Series:** Complete lessons for 1st- 9th grade students in both math and ELA taught by Tennessee teachers
- **STE(A)M Resource Hub:** Three challenges per week to spark creative thinking, design, and career exploration from the home
- **Start of the Year Checkpoint:** A free and optional assessment to measure student performance at the beginning of the year and help inform educators about student readiness for the year ahead
- **SchoolMealFinder.com:** An online resource to support families in finding meal sites closest to them
- **P-EBT Benefits:** Financial assistance is available for families who qualify for free or reduced school lunches, through the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program



Department of
Education

Family Resource Guide

Created: July 22, 2020

Equipping Schools for Reopening

The department is facilitating direct supports as well as grant opportunities for districts to ensure schools have necessary equipment to reopen schools as safely as possible, including working with agencies such as the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency to provide schools with safety equipment and PPE, including face coverings for all Tennessee educators. Together with other state leaders, the department will continue to assess and prioritize schools' health equipment and PPE needs for funding.

Continuing Academics and School-Based Services

Districts and schools across Tennessee are taking action to help ensure the education, health, and wellbeing of students this upcoming school year.

The Tennessee Department of Education published over 20 school reopening toolkits to support districts in finding creative solutions and approaches to continue academic instruction and school-based services while adapting to a changing environment. These district-facing toolkits cover topics that are critically important to families including **academics** as well as **nutrition, counseling, early childhood, wellbeing and mental health, special education services, and technology**.

Further, this summer the State Board of Education passed a policy that requires each local school district and public charter school to develop and submit to the department a continuous learning plan, which outlines ways the district or charter school plans to ensure each and every child can access 180 days of educational services through in-person, hybrid, or remote learning formats throughout the upcoming year.

Removing Barriers to Technology

The Tennessee Department of Education worked early and proactively to help ensure districts have access and ability to purchase devices and connectivity for students in the new school year.

In addition to negotiating significantly discounted rates with key providers-- rates available to all public school districts that are considering technology purchases-- the department is releasing \$50 million in grants to districts to help fund devices and connectivity for students.

More Resources

- Recommendations for the Management of COVID-19 in Schools, Tennessee Department of Health
- Reopening Guidance, Tennessee Department of Education
- Keep Children Healthy during the COVID-19 Outbreak, CDC
- Considerations for Schools, CDC
- Talking with children about Coronavirus Disease 2019, CDC