

Kansas City Regional Gating Criteria Considerations for Elementary, Middle and High Schools

Updates for September 2020: Primary and Secondary criteria considerations, mitigation measures.

Regional gating criteria considerations have been updated to reflect indicators from the CDC released September 15 and feedback from local public health departments and school districts. These gating criteria considerations will continue to be reviewed monthly.

Regarding the change in use of percent positive data: at the time of this update, the type and level of testing taking place across the Kansas City region is largely focused on symptomatic individuals and those with known exposure to detect and isolate cases and mitigate community transmission. There is also variability by agency in how positive cases are reported. However, the positivity rate remains an important piece of the larger regional picture. Therefore, based on feedback from regional public health, school and medical leaders, at this time we have retained the percent positive rate as an indicator but have made cases per 100,000 population as the deciding factor in the case of data in multiple color categories. Increasing testing to better understand community transmission remains a priority in the Kansas City region and we will continue to monitor testing levels as we move forward with these regional gating criteria considerations.

Absenteeism is also an important indicator in both student and staff populations. Some school districts have set up district dashboards providing current information on cases and the number of students and staff currently isolated or quarantined; we will continue to work toward providing this information at the regional scale.

The local public health officials in the greater Kansas City area offer these considerations for area school districts. The considerations are provided, recognizing that there are differences among school districts and areas of the region regarding exposure to and cases of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19).

Principles

- Local public health departments across metropolitan Kansas City recognize that each school district must make decisions regarding the opening and closing of in-person education in order to both keep their students and staff safe and to provide a high quality, equitable education for all students
- Reopening considerations provide a general framework for districts; each district will use this framework to meet its community's individual needs. These considerations do not suggest a length of time for a district to be in a certain instructional mode due to variability in district schedules and other considerations; discretion of instructional modality remains with the school districts and local public health departments.

- The considerations are provided to help communities, districts, families/caregivers, and staff understand and articulate risks and benefits, which are inherent and inevitable when reopening schools during a pandemic.
- The information is based on the best available evidence, science, and best practices in both education and public health. As new evidence and best practices emerge, considerations may change, and flexibility will be key.
- Responding to this new and changing situation depends on the coordination and cooperation of students, staff, families/caregivers, and the community with the goal of creating and maintaining safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments. Until a sufficient percentage of the population is no longer at risk of COVID-19, school communities must work to protect one another by effectively implementing protective measures, such as wearing face coverings and maintaining a physical distance.
- It is important that school districts work closely with their local public health department to evaluate conditions and make appropriate decisions regarding the level of school offerings and closure. We intend to review these considerations on a monthly basis with our regional public health leaders.
- Gating criteria data will be updated on a weekly basis and will be reported by local public health departments and Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) and is expected to change often due to the presence of the disease, the variability in receiving test results and reporting and other factors. The geographies used for each district may vary. If a district determines that two or more of the criteria factors are one color, it is suggested that districts use the guidance for that color. If one in each color, the number of cases per 100k population should be used as a guiding factor for schools to modify their operations.

Information for the gating criteria has been informed from many sources which can be found linked at the end of this document. Based on CDC guidance, “Each indicator or combination of indicators should neither be used in isolation nor should they be viewed as hard cut-offs...Rather, they serve as broad guideposts of inherent risk to inform decision-making.”¹

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/indicators.html#thresholds>

	Green	Yellow	Red
Gating Criteria			
Primary Criteria			
Number of new cases per 100,000 persons within the last 14 days	Less than 50	51- 200	201 or more
Trend in new cases per 100,000 persons over the last 14 days *If the slope of the “new cases per 100,000 persons within the last 14 days” trendline is either steady, decreasing or increasing ²	Steady or decreasing	Steady or increasing	Increasing
Ability of school to implement five key mitigation measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent and correct use of masks • Social distancing to the largest extent possible • Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette • Cleaning and disinfection • Contact tracing in collaboration with local health department <p>*This measure is largely qualitative; therefore, this will not be included in the regional data dashboard.</p>	Implemented all five strategies consistently and correctly	Implemented 3-4 strategies correctly and consistently	Implemented no strategies

² <https://marc2.org/covidhub/> - see “School Gating Criteria Metrics” or visit your local public health department dashboard. Regional data is updated weekly.

% of Persons Testing Positive (Positivity rate) for the 2-week period	Less than 5%	5% - 10%	10% or more
Secondary Criteria			
Percentage of hospital inpatient beds in the community that are occupied by patients with COVID-19 *This source data for this measure is regional and should be used at the regional level.	5-10%	10-15%	>15%
Instruction			
Elementary School	In-person instruction following safe opening principles	In-person instruction following safe opening principles	Remote
Middle/High School	In-person instruction following safe opening principles	Hybrid (combination of in-person and remote learning)	Remote

Extra and Co-Curricular Activities			
<p>Elementary School</p>	<p>In-person activities following safe operating principles.</p> <p>If allowed by school guidelines, spectator/audience should be distanced by household groups; masked both indoors and outdoors. Facilities should limit capacity to allow for 6’ physical distancing of ALL school-related events.</p>	<p>No all-school activities. Limit activities with accompanying safe operating principles including (but not limited to) masking and physical distancing.</p> <p>If allowed by school guidelines, spectator/audience should be distanced by household groups; masked both indoors and outdoors. Facilities should limit capacity to allow for 6’ physical distancing of ALL school-related events.</p> <p>Limited building visitor access with masks and physical distancing.</p>	<p>No extra-curricular activities</p>
<p>Middle/High School</p>	<p>In-person activities following safe operating principles.</p> <p>Spectator/audience should be distanced by household groups; masked both indoors and outdoors. Facilities should limit capacity to allow for 6’ physical distancing of ALL school-related events.</p>	<p>No high-risk activities.</p> <p>Limited building visitor access with masks and physical distancing.</p>	<p>No extra-curricular activities</p>

Transition between green, yellow or red levels may include additional data as identified by the district or local public health agency.

The superintendents have asked for information on considerations for when to close classrooms and individual schools. The following information summarizes input from Children’s Mercy Kansas City, Missouri Center for Public Health Excellence and the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Considerations for closing a classroom should include

- Evidence of intra-classroom transmission of COVID-19.
- Evidence of ≥ 2 cases in the classroom with the inability of all parties to be masked and physically distanced (e.g., 6 feet apart)

In cases where one student or staff in a classroom is positive, but no other students or staff have been deemed to be exposed by the local public health department, then the school does not need to close the classroom.

“Schools should assign students to cohorts and limit their exposure to other cohorts within the building. This means that students should stay with the same group of students and adults throughout the day. If classes must rotate, schools should consider rotating teachers, rather than moving groups of students throughout the school building. Strict adherence to a specific size of student groups should be discouraged, as this may limit the ability to provide in-person education. Schools should also implement and enforce assigned seating, and keep records of those seating charts to assist with identifying close contacts in the event a member of the school community is diagnosed with COVID-19. Cohorting may not be feasible for middle and high school students and thus, assigned seating can help to reduce contacts among older students.”³

Considerations for closing a school should include

- Evidence of intra-school transmission of COVID-19 that cannot be curtailed by single or multiple classroom closure
- The rates of positive students and staff exceeds the rate of positive cases in the community
- Inability to provide in-person instruction due to ill or exposed teachers
- Inability to provide appropriate cleaning and custodial services due to ill or exposed custodial staff
- Shelter at home order as deemed by local public officials

If the school is closed, consider closure for 24-48 hours to allow for deep-cleaning and further contact investigation by the LPHA. A longer closure may be needed based on the circumstances. Both school and LPHA should be involved in the decision to re-open.

³ <https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/COVID-MO-K12-Reopening-Guidance.pdf>

References and Resources

Missouri Center for Public Health Excellence

Minimum School Opening and Closing Recommendations June 24, 2020; <https://www.mocphe.org/>

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services/Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

<https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/COVID-MO-K12-Reopening-Guidance.pdf>

Johnson County Department of Health and Environment

Public Health Recommendations for Safe School Reopening; <https://www.jocogov.org/school-reopening-criteria>

North Kansas City School District

https://www.nkcschools.org/cms/lib/MO49000025/Centricity/domain/4/our%20district/Decision_Criteria_COVID-19.pdf

Children's Mercy Kansas City

<https://www.childrensmercy.org/siteassets/media/covid-19/guidance-for-school-re-opening-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.pdf>

Delaware Department of Education

https://www.doe.k12.de.us/cms/lib/DE01922744/Centricity/Domain/599/ddoe_returningtoschool_guidance_final.pdf

<https://myhealthycommunity.dhss.delaware.gov/locations/state>

National Federation of State High School Associations

Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities

https://www.nfhs.org/media/3812287/2020-nfhs-guidance-for-opening-up-high-school-athletics-and-activities-nfhs-smac-may-15_2020-final.pdf

Kansas National Education Association

<https://www.kneaweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Gating-Guidance-Indicators-Full.pdf>

Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/indicators.html>