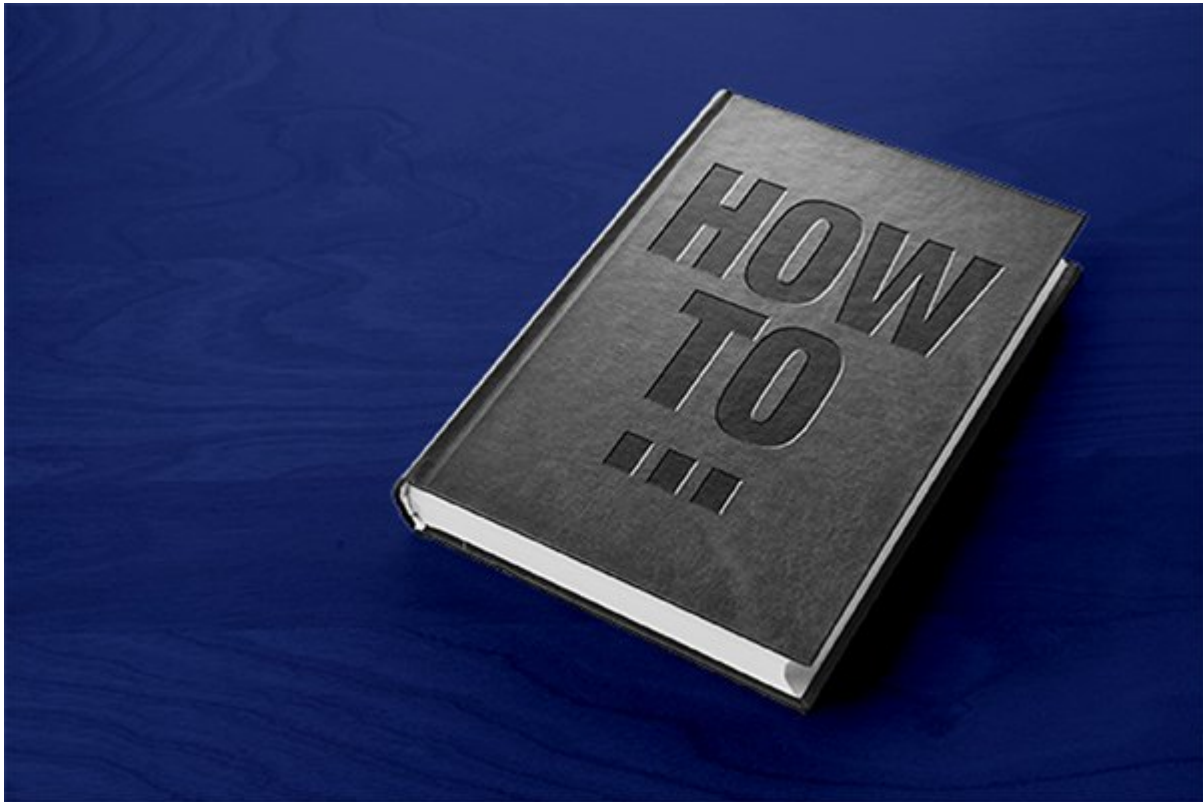


# Planning Your 2020-21 School Year? Use Our 'Guide to the Guides' on Reopening

By [Stephen Sawchuk](#) on [June 22, 2020 2:53 PM](#)



As summer gets underway in earnest and most schools let out, the nation's 14,000 school systems are now full-bore preparing for the 2020-21 school year and trying to square all the uncertainties that the novel coronavirus pandemic has thrown up.

One by one, the major professional associations that serve teachers and leaders are now releasing guidance for districts beginning this Herculean task.

They're excellent resources for superintendents, principals, and other district leaders, all much more detailed than anything state agencies are putting out.

The challenge is figuring out *which guide* will be most helpful for your needs *at this moment*.

Enter Education Week's new Guide to the Guides. We hope this will give you some starting points for the challenging deliberations and decisions to come.

In addition, Education Week has begun its own series, [How We Go Back to School](#), which includes some downloadable resources sure to help you begin the conversation with your leadership teams, principals, and staff—all coupled with our trademark analytical journalism. See part one of that series [here](#).

And now, here's our curated list.

## **National Education Association: [All Hands On Deck: Initial Guidance Regarding Reopening School Buildings](#)**. Released week of June 14.

This guide from the largest of the two national teachers' unions is based around four principles. In addition to focusing on teachers' concerns, like ensuring they're supported as they continue to teach in remote settings, the guide is notable for its focus on the on-the-ground role education support personnel play in schools: "ESPs often have the language skills to most effectively communicate with English-language learners and their families. They also are more likely to live in the community served by the school in which they work. Without these language skills, home/school communication would be difficult or impossible and diverse cultural norms would not be accommodated in school planning," the guide notes.

It also contains a helpful list of references to other resources from social-emotional learning organizations, social-justice groups, and recommendations crafted by some of the NEA's state affiliates.

- **Best for:** Understanding teachers', paraprofessionals', and ESPs' particular concerns about returning to school.

## **AASA, The School Superintendents' Association: [Guidelines for Reopening Schools](#)**.

Released June 18.

The AASA's recommendations grew out of its [recovery task force](#), a group of superintendents from around the country that began convening weekly in April. This comprehensive, 50-page single-spaced guide is organized around 10 guiding principles, including ensuring access to technology; changes to human resources management and contracts; transforming teaching, learning, and assessment; and anticipating budget and fiscal management issues, among others. Each of those 10 issues is explored in depth in sub-sections with specific "action steps" to take. The [guide is also available online](#).

Under building an equitable technology infrastructure, for example, the guide recommends distributing Chromebooks and other digital devices, but also lists steps districts can take to reinforce routines, build a sense of remote classroom community, and engage in student-to-student discussions.

Like the NEA guide, the AASA emphasizes that decisions shouldn't just be about recovery but also about putting new structures in place to make schools more responsive to student needs and more equitable. Notably, it endorses the expansion of trauma-informed and trauma-skilled schooling. It also endorses a movement towards more personalization, differentiated learning, and student-directed learning, ideas whose efficacy remain much debated in K-12 circles.

- **Best for:** A soup-to-nuts checklist of considerations.

## **Southern Regional Education Board: [Playbook in Progress: K-12 Education](#)**

**Recovery.** Released beginning June 8.

SREB's guide grew out of a task force it began in mid-April, representing two members appointed by the K-12 schools chiefs in each of its 16 states.

This guide, which is rolling out in stages, currently offers recommendations in governance and operations, and health and safety, with several subtopics nested beneath. It's online and interactive, so you can click accordion-style on the topics that most interest you. In coming weeks, SREB will add additional areas, including instruction, addressing learning loss, and assessment. Helpfully, some of the sub-topics show what supports those states are building in for districts. Under the mental-health portion of its health section, for example, the guide recommends that districts turn to community partners to support emerging needs and then details structures that Georgia, South Carolina, Florida, and Kentucky have put in place at the state level

- **Best for:** Knowing what supports schools in one of the 16 member states will receive. Planning for operations right now and turning to instruction in a few weeks.

## **ERS (Education Resource Strategies): [Decision Points for Covid Comeback](#)**

**Models.** Revised June 18.

This guide is focused primarily on the kind of instructional delivery approach districts must weigh for the 2020-21 school year (traditional in-person, remote learning, or a blended approach) It does not address some of the other key considerations (transportation, social-emotional learning). The group has also released [a calculator tool](#) so districts can plug in some numbers to help them as they weigh the costs of the three different approaches. Separately, ERS also has [a brief on the fiscal implications](#) for the school year, including cost comparisons from four large urban districts.

- **Best for:** Weighing the tradeoffs of in-person, remote, or hybrid schooling. Estimating costs of some scenarios.

## **International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) and several partners: [Providing Effective and Equitable Digital Learning for All Students](#)**. Released June 9.

This guide offers three major recommendations for improving districts' digital offerings during remote learning, especially for keeping it active and engaging, rather than passive. (The guide does not address other re-opening needs.) Each recommendation is arranged as a series of question prompts and contains links to resources. A helpful appendix outlines case studies of exemplary districts and charters that have made progress on the digital divide.

- **Best for:** Considering digital needs and teaching methods.

**American Federal of Teachers. A Plan To Safely Reopen America's Schools and Communities.** Released April 29.

This guide from the AFT outlines takes a broad lens on what will need to happen for the safe re-opening of K-12 schools, colleges, and hospitals. It's notable for its emphasis on collective bargaining as a tool in the process, noting that workers can bargain the need to be consulted as part of re-opening plans: "The surest way to protect workers in these instances is to put these protections into collective bargaining agreements," it notes. It also outlines federal investments the union would like to see, including \$175 billion in additional education stabilization funds for K-12 and higher ed., as well as increases in Medicaid and food stamp spending.

- **Best for:** Big-picture overview of re-opening of K-12 schools, universities, and health facilities.

***Do you have another guide you'd like us to include? Please send it to Education***

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