

Statewide Safe Schools Reopening Survey: State Public Charter School Authority

Charter schools, like schools across the nation, are creating school reopening plans for the fall. **However, these plans make two (often unrecognized) assumptions. The first assumption is that teachers and school-based staff will be comfortable returning to the schools given the current COVID-19 public health crisis. The second assumption is that these groups of professionals will agree on the measures required to realize a safe reopening.** To explore these assumptions, the Guinn Center, Nevada Action for School Options, and Nevada Succeeds partnered to administer an independent survey to school-based licensed and support staff, as well as school administrators.

The purpose of the survey is to understand the comfort level of these professionals in returning to classrooms given the current preparation underway by districts. The survey also asks respondents to consider the importance of specific actions schools and districts could enact to attempt to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The survey, which was administered between June 15th to June 24th, was anonymous and included 11 questions. **Overall, we received 9,220 responses statewide. Of these, 380 were State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) charter school employees, which included 269 licensed educators, 47 support staff, and 64 school administrators.** The data presented below include only responses from SPCSA charter school employees. While this summary represents initial discoveries, a more complete report with additional findings will be forthcoming.

Comfortability Returning to Schools The survey included two questions about the respondents' comfort levels returning to their school and/or classroom. The first question asked individuals to provide their comfort level given the current school/district policies, while the second asked about their comfort level given all the public health precautions they felt necessary to adopt (except the availability of a vaccine).

As displayed in the figure below, **a greater percentage of SPCSA charter school employees felt comfortable returning to schools given the current policies than those that were uncomfortable or expressed neutral feelings (54 percent to 46 percent, respectively).** If additional precautions are taken, a larger percentage of employees would be comfortable returning to school in the fall, but a sizable group of employees – 22 percent of the respondents – will remain uncomfortable returning to school in the fall. This challenges one of the assumptions of school-reopenings during the pandemic – that all school employees will be comfortable returning to schools in the fall.

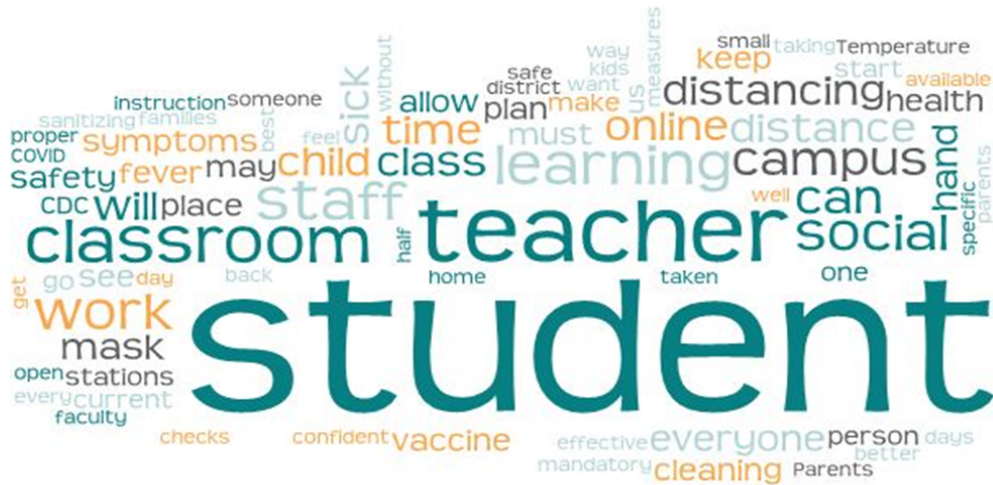
At this time, given the current state of the COVID-19 public health situation and current school/district policies, how comfortable would you be to return to your school/classroom?



Assuming a COVID-19 vaccine is not available, but given all the other public health precautions you feel are important to reopen schools (not just those listed in this survey), if schools and districts instituted all of these, how comfortable would you feel returning to the classroom at the start of the school year?



Student-Centered Focus of Respondents The survey also offered respondents the opportunity to provide comments regarding the actions that the district and Nevada Department of Education could undertake to increase their confidence in reopening schools safely. Specifically, the open-ended question asked, “What actions – if taken by school leadership, districts, and/or the Nevada Department of Education – would increase your confidence that schools are ready to reopen in the fall?” Individuals provided opinions ranging from reopening schools without any changes necessary to moving to 100 percent virtual instruction until a vaccine is available. **However, despite the differing opinions provided, students and learning were the primary foci of respondents’ concerns** – as evidenced by the word cloud below that was created with the open-ended responses from this survey question.



Even though school building professionals may have different ideas about the best set of actions or strategies district and state leaders should pursue to enhance safety, the ideas are informed largely by concern for the students, both their safety and learning environment.

Options for Reopening The survey asked respondents how strongly they agreed or disagreed with various actions schools and districts could undertake as a reaction to COVID-19. These results are presented in the Appendix. Respondent groups held similar views on the importance of various actions – with the percentage of respondents agreeing with the statements in remarkably similar patterns. However, noteworthy differences did emerge (challenging the second assumption that differing groups of professionals will agree on the best course to reopen schools). Significant findings included:

- Overall, licensed educators, support staff, and school administrators provided remarkably positive responses to nearly all proposed actions the district could take to support schools to combat COVID-19 related issues.
- While respondents note they want more disinfecting supplies in the classrooms, actions that engage families in the process of keeping the students, teachers, and the school safe also elicited high levels of support – particularly educating families on when they should make the decision to keep their child home due to illness.
- Licensed and, to a lesser extent, support staff more strongly support more flexible sick leave policies for all school-based personnel than do school administrators.

Additional analyses from the survey data will be produced throughout the summer.

Appendix – Options for Reopening Responses by Respondent Category

Question	Percentage of Agree and Strongly Agree Responses					
	Licensed Educator	n()	Support Staff	n()	Administrator	n()
Provide cleaning and disinfecting supplies in every classroom	97.8%	267	93.6%	47	93.8%	64
Educate families on when they should make the decision to keep their child home due to illness	94.0%	268	91.5%	47	92.2%	64
Educate students and families on proper handwashing, personal hygiene, and sanitation practices related to COVID-19	92.9%	268	91.5%	47	87.5%	64
Establish strict policies instructing teachers and staff when they cannot come to work based on symptoms and indications of possible exposure	89.6%	268	87.2%	47	90.6%	64
More flexible sick-day policies for all school-based personnel and encourage utilizing with even minor symptoms	89.6%	268	83.0%	47	75.0%	64
Develop a communication plan to notify staff, parents, and community officials in the event that a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19	89.5%	267	87.2%	47	89.1%	64
Update contact information for all families	85.8%	268	80.4%	46	81.3%	64
Develop the guidelines for when the school should close due to an outbreak and move to an online learning environment	85.8%	267	89.4%	47	89.1%	64
Train staff to recognize signs that a student is ill and how to properly care for them	83.5%	267	89.4%	47	85.9%	64
Establish a protocol for isolating any individual exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms in designated rooms	82.8%	268	80.9%	47	81.3%	64
Prioritize training students and families to use online platforms such as Google classroom	82.5%	268	73.9%	46	82.8%	64
Focus on relationship building with students and families, including establishing clear methods of two-way families and schools communication at the outset of the school year	81.7%	268	80.4%	46	82.8%	64
Give teachers time to collaboratively plan and realign curriculum to account for lost learning time	79.9%	268	80.4%	46	77.8%	63
Institute plans to ensure students can access physical and mental health/wellness supports	77.5%	267	76.1%	46	75.0%	64
Training to identify and report indications of child abuse or other safety issues in a virtual learning environment	73.3%	266	80.4%	46	65.1%	63
Incorporate more intentional methods of social emotional learning for students	69.7%	267	69.6%	46	73.4%	64
Mandatory temperature check for everyone entering school buildings	66.4%	268	55.3%	47	59.4%	64
Install protective panels for frontline office and food service team members	64.3%	266	57.4%	47	67.2%	64
For teachers who reference a reason for feeling uncomfortable being present in-person at the school, allow them to provide distance-learning instruction only	63.9%	266	61.7%	47	48.4%	64
Develop social distancing guidelines and protocols for students, school staff, guests, and visitors	62.9%	267	68.1%	47	68.8%	64
Hire or contract for additional school nursing services	61.2%	268	60.9%	46	53.1%	64
Hire or contract for additional counseling to provide social-emotional wellness support	59.3%	268	58.7%	46	60.9%	64
Place each student desk 6 feet apart to ensure proper social distancing in the classroom (acknowledging that this may limit class sizes)	50.7%	268	46.8%	47	43.8%	64
Maintain social distancing on school buses (acknowledging this might require additional bus routes and changes to the school start times to accommodate)	41.1%	265	46.8%	47	38.7%	62
No mandatory in-person student attendance at school until an approved vaccine is widely available	39.3%	267	36.2%	47	40.6%	64
Elimination of all in-person extracurricular activities outside of normal school hours	33.1%	266	30.4%	46	36.5%	63