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SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM  
GOVERNOR

August 28, 2020

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Superintendents, Charter Leaders, School Board Members  
**FROM:** Ryan Stewart, Cabinet Secretary, Public Education Department  
**RE:** **Eligibility to Return to In-Person Learning**

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Dear Superintendents and Charter Leaders,

Yesterday, the Governor and the Public Education Department (PED) announced an update on school reentry and public health conditions for the state. The updated information falls in line with PED's reentry guiding principles:

- Prioritize the health and safety of our students, staff, and communities
- Maximize the amount of safe, in-person learning opportunities
- Make decisions based on science and data

The updated reentry requirements are designed to ensure that both public health conditions and school preparations are conducive for a safe return to in-person learning. From a public health perspective, state officials have established thresholds for test positivity rates and an average of new daily case rates that are key indicators of whether local health conditions are appropriate for a return to in-person learning. From a school preparation perspective, the requirements outlined are designed to ensure that schools are ready to operationalize a strong academic program as well as implement COVID-safe practices.

As of now, the counties shown in green on the map at the end of this document have test positivity rates below 5% and new daily case rates below 8 per 100,000. These thresholds established by the state's public health officials are key indicators of health-related readiness for schools to be able to reopen safely for in-person learning. Counties indicated in yellow and red on the map are above one or both of these thresholds, respectively.

In order to be eligible to bring students back for in-person learning, counties must reach public health conditions that fall below these thresholds. As of right now, the green counties are on track to be able to bring elementary school students back for in-person learning in the hybrid model beginning after Labor Day. As of right now, the counties in yellow and red are not on track to bring students back for in-person learning after Labor Day.

PED and the Department of Health (DOH) will review this information again on Wednesday, September 2, and produce an updated map. Counties that move into the green zone at that time will be eligible to begin bringing students in for in-person learning after Labor Day. Once districts and charters reach public health eligibility for the return of in-person learning, school boards and governing councils have local autonomy to determine the specific date on which elementary students can return in the hybrid model. PED and DOH will continue to update and report on the eligibility map on at least a bi-weekly basis.

Once a district or charter school begins in-person learning, school buildings will not be automatically shut down if a county falls out of the green zone for a period of time. This is important to ensure that schools are not routinely opening, closing, and reopening if no cases are present in the school. Public health officials will establish parameters for circumstances where a rapid and severe outbreak in a local area does necessitate a district-wide or specific school closure.

Districts and schools that remain in remote learning will continue to be eligible to bring in small groups of PreK-3 students and students with disabilities in a 5:1 student to teacher ratio.

Districts and charter schools are required to have an approved PED reentry plan prior to bringing back elementary school students in the hybrid model. This includes having plans in place to identify and support at-risk students. Districts and charter schools may utilize the Engage NM program sponsored by the state or implement a local plan for supporting at-risk students.

The state is collaborating with the Governor's Office and the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) to ensure that all districts and charter schools have the masks and PPE on hand to equip all students and staff. Districts and charter schools may request that students bring in their own multi-layer cloth mask in a manner similar to a uniform policy. Districts and charter schools must provide a mask for any student who cannot afford or who forgets a mask on a given day. Districts must provide staff members with masks. Staff members who work in a close contact assignment (such as those who must conduct diaper changes, change feeding tubes, or who work with students with disabilities that require less than six feet of social distance) must be provided with medical grade masks (including procedural, surgical, or N95 masks) and a face shield.

To facilitate an effective reentry with sufficient masks and PPE, PED surveyed all districts and charters to identify mask and PPE needs. Based on the results of that survey, PED has worked with DHSEM to procure and prepare to distribute equipment that will supplement district purchases and bring every school up to the following baseline of masks and PPE on hand to start the year:

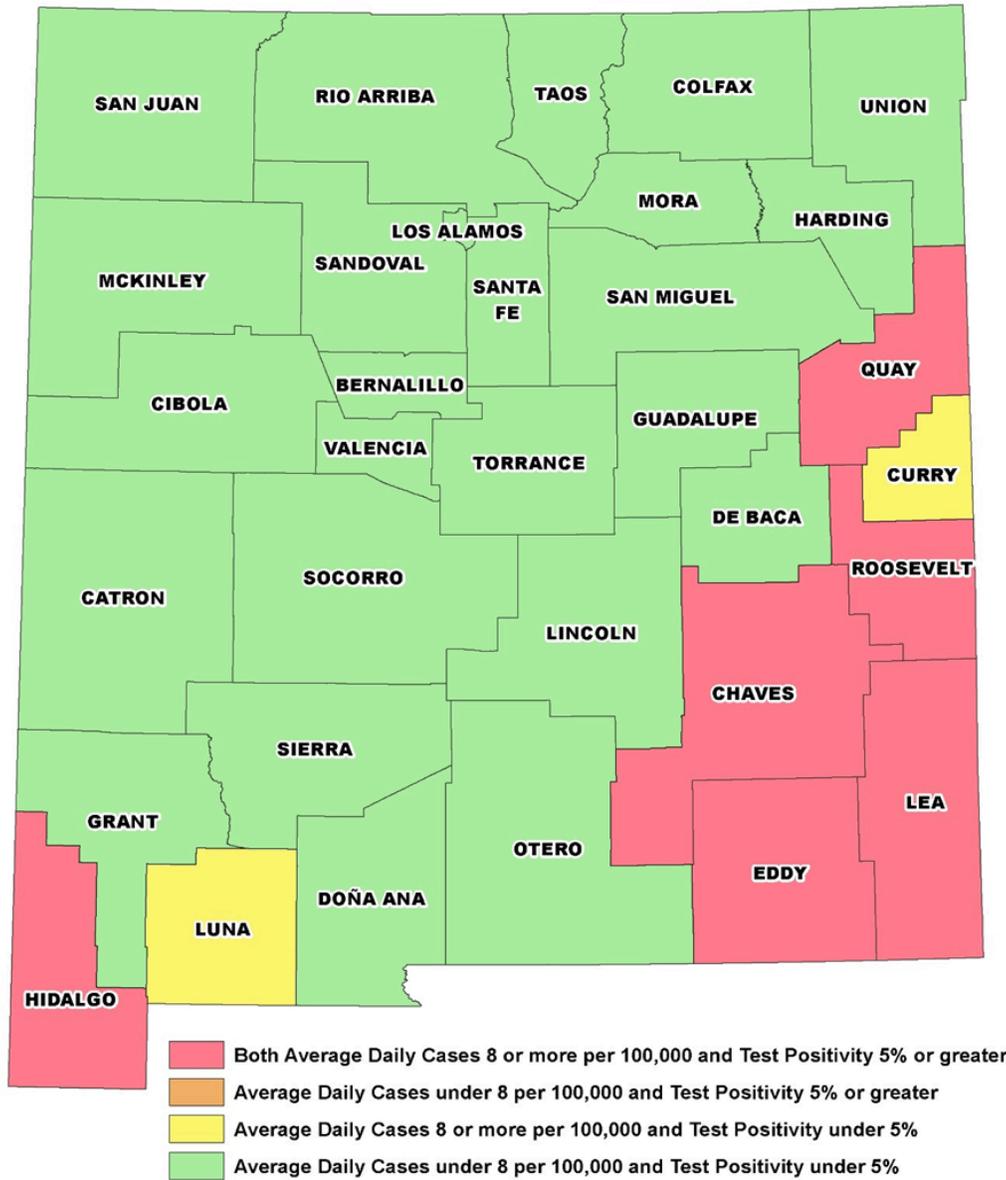
- 2 multi-layer cloth masks per teacher
- 2 multi-layer cloth masks per student
- Additional disposable masks for students and staff
- 20 medical masks and a face shield for each staff member with a close contact assignment

These supplemental supplies will be distributed over the course of next week to all LEAs. District-authorized charter schools should work with their authorizing district regarding access to these supplies. PED will work with districts and charter schools to maintain a running log of PPE inventory and, where necessary, will help to facilitate district and charter school PPE and mask purchases to ensure no school runs out of needed supply. Any district or charter school that falls short of having the above level of supplies on hand after the distribution of additional materials from DHSEM should contact their Deputy Secretary or Charter Schools Office point of contact immediately.

It will also be essential to have COVID-safe cleaning procedures in place as students reenter the building. Deputy Secretaries and Charter Office Staff will follow up to check in on cleaning procedures that have been established. In addition, each district or school will need to have notified PED of the rapid response point person. PED's Safe and Healthy Schools Bureau will contact this individual and make sure they have the information and training they need to support effective and efficient rapid response.

Below is a list of districts and their designated points of contact. For general questions, state charters should contact Karen Woerner at (505) 490-0405 or email [charter.schools@state.nm.us](mailto:charter.schools@state.nm.us). For questions specific to PPE and COVID response for charter schools, charter leaders may contact Brigette Russell at [brigette.russell2@state.nm.us](mailto:brigette.russell2@state.nm.us) or (505) 470-1574.

Deputy Secretary Kata Sandoval (505) 469-2061	Deputy Secretary Adan Delgado (505) 690-5412	Deputy Secretary Gwen Perea Warniment (505) 699-2059
Estancia Municipal Schools Jemez Valley Public Schools Laguna Department of Education Magdalena Municipal Schools Mountainair Public Schools Quemado Independent Schools Vaughn Municipal Schools Albuquerque Public Schools Belen Consolidated Schools Bernalillo Public Schools Los Lunas Public Schools Moriarty Municipal Schools Rio Rancho Public Schools Dora Consolidated Schools Elida Municipal Schools Floyd Municipal Schools Fort Sumner Municipal Schools Grady Municipal Schools House Municipal Schools Logan Municipal Schools Melrose Public Schools San Jon Municipal Schools Texico Municipal Schools Clovis Municipal Schools Portales Municipal Schools Tucumcari Public Schools	Chama Valley Schools Cuba Independent Schools Dulce Independent Schools Jemez Mountain Public Schools Mesa Vista Consolidated Schools Peñasco Independent Schools Questa Independent Schools Taos Municipal Schools Española Public Schools Los Alamos Public Schools Pojoaque Valley Public Schools Las Vegas City Public Schools Mora Independent Schools Pecos Independent Schools Santa Fe Indian School Santa Rosa Consolidated Schools Wagon Mound Public Schools West Las Vegas Public Schools Santa Fe Public Schools	Capitan Municipal Schools Carrizozo Municipal Schools Cloudcroft Municipal Schools Corona Public Schools Hondo Valley Public Schools Ruidoso Municipal Schools Tularosa Municipal Schools Alamogordo Public Schools Socorro Consolidated Schools Animas Public Schools Cobre Consolidated Schools Deming Public Schools Hatch Valley Public Schools Lordsburg Municipal Schools Reserve Independent Schools Silver Consolidated Schools Truth or Consequences Municipal Schools Gadsden Independent Schools Las Cruces Public Schools
Deputy Secretary Tim Hand (505) 629-8827	Managing Director Allison Briceno; (505) 469-1040	Policy Director John Sena (505) 570-7816
Eunice Public Schools Hobbs Municipal Schools Jal Public Schools Tatum Municipal Schools Lovington Public Schools Dexter Consolidated Schools Hagerman Municipal Schools Lake Arthur Municipal Schools Loving Municipal Schools Artesia Public Schools Carlsbad Municipal Schools Roswell Independent Schools	Aztec Municipal Schools Bloomfield Schools Central Consolidated Schools Farmington Municipal Schools Gallup-McKinley County Schools Zuni Public Schools Grants-Cibola County Schools Cimarron Public Schools Clayton Municipal Schools Des Moines Municipal Schools Maxwell Municipal Schools Mosquero Municipal Schools Raton Public Schools Roy Municipal Schools Springer Municipal Schools	UNMH Children's Psychiatric Center NMCD Probation and Parole DOH Sequoyah Adolescent Treatment Center CYFD Juvenile Justice Education NM School for the Blind and Visually Impaired NM School for the Deaf



**Test Positivity by Average Daily Cases per 100,000 Population by New Mexico County, August 17-23, 2020**