
A Strong and Healthy Start: Safety and Health Guidance for Vermont Schools FAQ 1

Rev. July 9, 2020

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) has released joint guidance with the Vermont Department of Health on safely reopening schools. This document, [A Strong and Healthy Start: Safety and Health Guidance for Vermont Schools](#), provides health guidance to school administrators and school personnel as they plan and implement the reopening of schools for the 2020-21 School Year in the context of COVID-19.

This Frequently Asked Questions document responds to follow up questions from educators and administrators and is intended to clarify and expand on the guidance.

In this FAQ:

- [Physical distancing \(six-foot, classroom structure\)](#)
- [Alcohol content in cleaning supplies and hand sanitizer](#)

Q1: The guidance states that the six-foot number for separating student workspaces is recommendation not a requirement. I know that there are many educational leaders who are taking the spacing measure as a requirement and are feeling like they cannot comply with that “expectation.” Could you clarify the intent of the measures?

The best way to prevent the spread of coronavirus is wear a facial covering *and* stay 6 feet apart. The guidance reflects that reality and reopening schools need to adhere to both strategies as much as possible.

The best practice is to maintain six feet of distance between students to minimize the risk of spreading the virus. At the same time, we recognize this may not be possible in all settings. Therefore, it is a strong recommendation but not required. Schools should set up classrooms as best they can.

Q2: Could best practices include spacing student workstations closer than 6 feet apart when aligned in the same direction? If plastic barriers are installed between student work stations, how might that measure help reduce the spacing?

Maintaining a six-foot distance is preferable, but may not always be possible. If installed properly, plastic barriers between students would eliminate the need for the six-foot distancing. Turning workstations to face in the same direction is a best practice detailed in the [Strong and Healthy Start Guidance](#).

Q3: Is there a way to balance the risk of physical distancing and facial coverings depending on the settings?

When it is not possible to distance students by six feet and they are all wearing facial coverings, there is still some risk. When students or teachers and staff aren't wearing facial coverings, being six feet apart becomes more important.

We suggest that school leaders review the guidance and note when words like "possible" or "feasible" are included so you can see where the opportunities for "doing the best you can" come in.

Q4: In the guidance document, there seems to be an inconsistency with cleaning and hand hygiene. The cleaning says the alcohol content should be 70%, while hand sanitizer should be 60%. Why would the guidance be different for the two levels of alcohol?

Those alcohol content percentages come from CDC guidance (See: [CDC/EPA Cleaning & Disinfecting Guidance](#) and [Coronavirus Disease 2019: Protect Yourself](#)). Cleaning supplies can have more alcohol since they don't come directly in contact with skin.
