

Physical Distancing

In-Person Learning Resources for Parents and Caregivers at Chicago Public Schools — A Resource Created by Healthy Schools Campaign for Parents and Caregivers in Chicago Public Schools

MARCH 2021

HEALTHY SCHOOLS
CAMPAIGN

EVERY CHILD DESERVES TO LEARN + THRIVE

Physical Distancing

Maintaining distance between individuals reduces COVID-19 transmission by reducing the intensity of exposure to infectious droplets. Physical distancing should be encouraged whenever and wherever possible inside the school building. Group distancing, in the form of “pods” at schools, means that students in one class are kept separate from students in other classes.

What Experts Say

All schools should ensure that the maximum physical distance is maintained whenever possible inside and outside of the classroom. Most public health experts agree that at least six feet is best but that three feet is adequate for younger student populations. Best practices to achieve consistent physical distancing throughout the school day include:

- Teachers and administrators should maximize their distance from students as much as possible, for as long as possible.
- Strategies such as spreading desks out in the classroom, staggering bathroom breaks or class transition times, and discontinuing locker use may aid in physical distancing.
- Schools may remove excess furniture from classrooms.
- Schools may also group students by class or in smaller groups, and allow students in those groups (sometimes called “pods”) to be nearer to each other than six feet.
- Specialized teachers may rotate between classrooms instead of having students move between classrooms.
- If there is limited space for a class to practice physical distancing, students within the class could be further organized into smaller pods that stay together throughout the day.

What CPS Says

Students and teachers will remain in fixed pods of approximately 15 students once they are in the building and throughout the full day. Teachers will rotate across a minimal number of pods in order to provide students access to all core content classes. Pods will stay physically distanced from one another in the building to avoid intermingling. Students and teachers will remain physically distanced within each classroom to the extent possible.

Schools should ensure six feet of physical distance between students and staff at times when intermingling could occur, such as arrival and dismissal. Specialized teachers (art, music, PE, library, technology) will interact with a maximum of 10 pods at a time and conduct lessons in home classrooms, limiting time traveled in shared spaces by students.

Parents and Caregivers Should Know

CPS has focused on using a pod system to limit exposure to a small amount of students throughout in-school experiences. In addition, CPS is using a six-foot rule of physical distance between pods. Some of the questions you may consider asking your school leaders include:

- What is the plan for ensuring physical distancing is maintained during bathroom breaks and transition times?
- What will the classroom layout look like, and how much distance will there be between students within a classroom pod?
- How will the school schedule be changed to allow for staggered arrival and departure times that accommodate pods?
- Explain how quarantining for pods will work when there are multiple children from the same household in different pods. If one child tests positive, will the classmates of that child’s siblings in the school be notified and required to quarantine?

The best practices in this document are based on guidelines provided by the Harvard [T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#) and the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).