

PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES PLANNING IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

How we are preparing for a healthy and safe learning environment **SEPTEMBER 1, 2020**



IN MEMORIAM

As of this writing, more than 180,000 Americans have died of coronavirus [COVID-19]. Like many schools that serve Brooklyn, our community at Brooklyn Laboratory Charter Schools has been hit particularly hard: since school doors closed in March, our scholars, teachers, and staff members have lost dozens of loved ones. We mourn these losses every day. Even as we strive to honor those lives and process our grief, we feel compelled to do our part to see that this type of tragedy does not happen again. As educators, one way we are paying tribute to those we have lost is by building a shared commitment to and understanding of how to safeguard the health and well-being of our school community during this pandemic.

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DISCLAIMER

These materials are provided by Brooklyn Laboratory Charter Schools (LAB) and Friends Of Brooklyn Laboratory Charter Schools and reflect input from AKA Studio, Urban Projects Collaborative, Gensler, PBDW Architects, PSF Projects Architecture DPC, SITU, and WXY (collectively, the "Parties") for informational purposes only and do not constitute legal, medical, architectural, or other professional advice on any matter. The reader is not entitled to rely on any statement or matter described in these materials. The Parties assume no responsibility for the accuracy or timeliness of any information provided herein, or the efficacy, safety, or suitability of the plans and information described herein for any individual or organization. These materials and information are not a substitute for obtaining professional advice from the reader's own lawyers and other advisors in the appropriate jurisdiction or state. COVID-19 is extremely contagious and is believed to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another; and, as a result, federal and state health agencies recommend social distancing and various other measures to mitigate the risk of contracting the virus. These materials describe protocols designed to reduce the spread of COVID-19. However, despite safety protocols and other measures that a school or other organization may put in place to mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19 on campus or at any other facility, there are inherent risks that employees, students, visitors, and other individuals may become exposed to or infected with COVID-19 by coming to a campus or other facility. These risks include, but are not limited to, the following: exposure to COVID-19, becoming infected with COVID-19, or becoming a symptomatic or asymptomatic carrier of the virus.

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LETTER FROM OUR BOARD

Education sure looks different amid a global pandemic.

Some schools are opening for in-person classes. Many are teaching remotely. Amid the public debate about these paths, we cannot lose sight of a critically important fact: School is happening. We need to provide meaningful options to support students to learn and thrive.

The best resourced schools are providing families with options for how and where their children will learn this year. Some families have more options than others, more ways to make things work. This discrepancy is problematic. Students' opportunities for academic success, with or without a pandemic, should never depend on circumstance or zip code. Education requires equity, and the current crisis demands it. It behooves schools, communities, cities, states, and our federal government to make this school year's options meaningful—realistic, safe, accessible, and actionable—to all families.

Brooklyn Laboratory Charter Schools (LAB) has devised approaches to provide options while safeguarding the school community through creative solutions. We are offering a fully remote learning model for those who choose it, and we are reopening our school buildings. We did not make these decisions lightly; we devoted months of research and planning to make modifications to our facilities to support the health and safety of our students and staff.

To get our school open again, we collaborated with some of the best in the design and construction business to identify and implement facilities modifications that support safety and public



LETTER FROM OUR BOARD

health. We are prioritizing the social and emotional needs of the scholars we serve, and we are applying common-sense design principles built around the idea that you can be socially distant and still have an intimate and personalized approach to learning. We are committed to demonstrating that schools can provide health screening checks upon entry and incorporate social distancing and other safety factors throughout the day.

We are working to make this happen every day.

We appreciate the anxiety and concern that our school community is experiencing. The best solutions to promote health, well-being, and learning will arise as we engage with and solicit feedback from students, families, and teachers. It's vital that we share approaches transparently, seek input consistently, and endeavor to understand how our scholars, families, educators, and staff may experience potential solutions. Limiting harm is our prime directive.

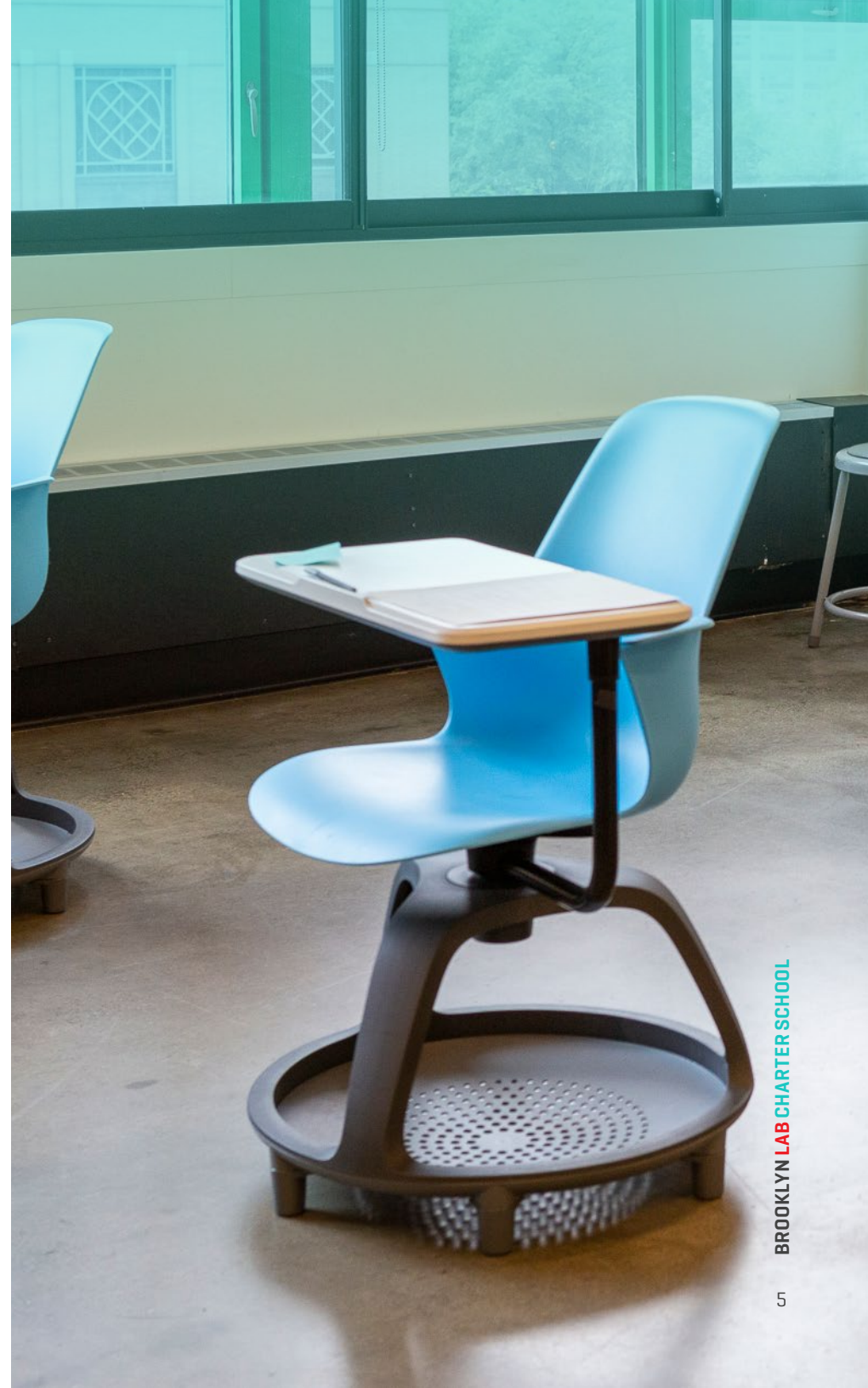
As a laboratory school, advancing design solutions and sharing tools for effective adaptation is part of our mission. We have benefited greatly from the work of other schools, and we hope our thinking and experience can help others.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and school leadership, we are proud to share what meaningful options look like for us. Please consider the document that follows a summary of our thinking and experience to date. We are excited to learn and work together with you.

Sincerely,

*Mickey Revenaugh
Adrien Siegfried
Tokumbo Shobowale
Gary Wood*

*Sujata Rajpurohit
Walter Loughlin
Nadine Augusta*



INTRODUCTION



Urban Umbrella

INTRODUCTION

UNDERSTANDING THIS GUIDE

For many of us, COVID-19 seemed to come out of nowhere, and it wreaked much greater havoc on our societies—and especially on our schools—than any of us could have anticipated. Yet it is incumbent upon us as educators to understand and adapt to this new world of learning.

At Brooklyn Laboratory Charter Schools (LAB), we closed our middle and high school doors on March 13. What followed was a mix of remote learning and tiered supports to help roughly 800 scholars in grades 6 through 11 continue their studies through the end of the school year. (2020-2021 is the first school year that we have grade 12)

In mid April, with New York City in the throes of a formidable COVID-19 outbreak, we started our planning for the 2020-2021 school year, taking a deep dive into research on different strategies that safeguard health and support learning. We also consulted experts in diverse fields ranging from health to design to education to equity. Finally, we embarked on a reflection and discernment process to rebuild a learning environment that prioritizes and protects the safety, health, and well-being of everyone in our community

That journey enabled us to reopen our doors in August. This guide chronicles our experience.

First, some context about our school: LAB, a public school in Downtown Brooklyn, exists to serve students from across our borough and city, regardless of their academic level, English language proficiency, or ability. Our school has a rich history of using design thinking to anchor our core approach to teaching and learning. We strive to honor input from diverse stakeholders, fulfill the needs of all learners, and collaborate on tough challenges. We used this same

INTRODUCTION • UNDERSTANDING THIS GUIDE

approach when we embarked on creating a master facilities plan for the era of COVID-19.

Over the course of 16 weeks between April and August, we held more than 150 meetings (including a set of intensive working sessions, or "charrettes" in design parlance) to gather insights from industry experts, government officials, architects, urban designers, educators, staff members, parents, scholars, and many others. Our core partners included Urban Projects Collaborative (UPC), a company that supports capital projects that improve quality of life and a better built environment, and five design firms: Gensler, PBDW, PSF Projects, SITU, and WXY. We also engaged Tiffany Kimmel Carlin as an architect-in-residence and collaborated with AKA Studios, the architecture firm that designed LAB's high school. Later in the process, we welcomed educational industry experts including the National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools, EdTogether, Public Impact, The New Teacher Project, InnovateEDU, ASU Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, City Year, EL Education, The Forum for Youth Investment, Transcend, Turnaround for Children, The Center for Black Educator Development, Character LAB, Dr. Anindya Kundu, The Equity x Innovation Lab, Q.E.D., Seton Montessori Institute, and Dezudio.

We intentionally sought to make these charrettes safe zones to share our hopes, fears, concerns, and ideas, placing a value on vulnerability as an avenue to learning and growth. As a group, we set out to answer key questions:

- + *What will classrooms look like and feel like?*
- + *How can we keep students and teachers safe on their way to and from school?*
- + *How will we honor scientific and public health guidelines?*

From these meetings emerged four mission-critical documents: a back-to-school facilities tool kit, an instructional program scheduling map, a playbook for success coaching, and a guidebook to create learning environments that build identity and agency in this new world.

EXPLORE OUR BACK TO SCHOOL RESOURCES

www.equitybydesign.org

Facilities Tool Kit

Program Scheduling Map

*Success Coaching
Playbook*

*Learner Identity and
Agency Guidebook*



These documents—which are available at www.equitybydesign.org—have become our foundational texts for the COVID-19 era.

We embrace the importance of iteration; we have honed specific practices and protocols for the new school year through feedback and insights since we published these tools. We researched suggestions for school facilities modifications and developed our own guide to support the needs of all learners. We established strategies for physical distancing. We also explored options for serving students with special needs, and how to facilitate learning despite the disruptions to the new classroom space. We then developed detailed plans for implementing best practices. Ultimately, we organized these new approaches into four basic categories:

- + *strategies to prevent the spread;*
- + *strategies to contain the spread;*
- + *strategies to facilitate learning and continual improvement; and*
- + *strategies to establish an ongoing, iterative process.*

In addition to applying these strategies at LAB, our goal has been to codify and share our findings so other schools can benefit from our strategic reopening process, planning, and approach. We recognize there is no one solution for every school from Brooklyn to Bakersfield, but we are committed to participating in practical conversations from which we can all learn.

We hope you find the insights shared in this resource helpful.

INTRODUCTION

SUMMER OF SAFEGUARDING THE FUTURE

school
year
begins

MARCH 2020	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
<p>3/13 Brooklyn LAB doors close in wake of COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>We then provided a mix of remote learning and tiered supports to help roughly 800 scholars in grades 6 through 11 continue their studies through the end of the school year.</p>	<p><u>Planning for Our Facilities</u></p>	<p>5/11 LAB engages several architecture, planning, and design firms in series of <i>charrettes</i> to address returning to school.</p>	<p>6/10 Front Porch design kickoff</p> <p>6/26 Re-entry planning call with school directors</p> <p>6/30 New furniture order placed</p>	<p>7/29 Front Porch Implementation Plan released</p> <p>Front Porch rehearsal and classroom mock-up viewing</p>	<p>8/19 Brooklyn LAB Prep Academy begins, marking the first time students return</p> <p>8/5 New furniture installed</p> <p>8/10 LAB staff return</p> <p>8/14 Master facilities plan binder released</p>
		<p><u>Engaging Our Stakeholders</u></p>	<p>6/5 Focus group on classrooms and learning spaces and preliminary occupancy diagrams</p> <p>6/23-6/24 Design assumptions meetings with staff</p>	<p>7/21, 7/24, 7/28 Focus group sessions with scholars and families</p>	<p>8/7 Facilities plan feedback session with staff</p> <p>8/14 Focus group sessions with scholars and families</p>
	<p><u>Publishing Guidance for Professionals</u></p> <p>4/29 <i>How to Reopen Schools: A 10-Point Plan Putting Equity at the Center</i></p>	<p>5/7 <i>To Reopen, America Needs Laboratory Schools</i></p> <p>5/26 <i>Back to School Facilities Tool Kit</i></p>	<p>6/23 <i>Back to School Instructional Program Scheduling Map</i></p>		<p>8/13 <i>Back To School Success Coaching Playbook</i></p> <p>8/24 <i>Back to School Learner Identity & Agency Guidebook</i></p>



PREVENTING THE SPREAD

Brooklyn LAB has adopted a number of strategies and structural solutions to prevent virus spread and support personal health measures.

THE BIG PICTURE



Pandemics never spread on their own; the viruses behind them need human hosts to keep momentum going. While researchers are still trying to understand precisely how COVID-19 spreads, they agree on the need to limit exposure to airborne particles.

While it is impossible to be out in the world and eliminate all risk, it is possible to prevent or mitigate the spread by following specific recommendations and guidelines from public health officials and infectious disease doctors. In the school environment, this means rigorous adherence to personal health measures.

We have adopted the three primary strategies health experts recommend for individuals to limit spread: wearing face coverings, practicing physical distancing, and embracing hand hygiene. We also created structural solutions that reduce virus spread and support personal health measures. These include physical barriers, HVAC modifications (increasing fresh air), and signage.

The following pages elaborate on how we are implementing these strategies in practice.

PREVENTING THE SPREAD

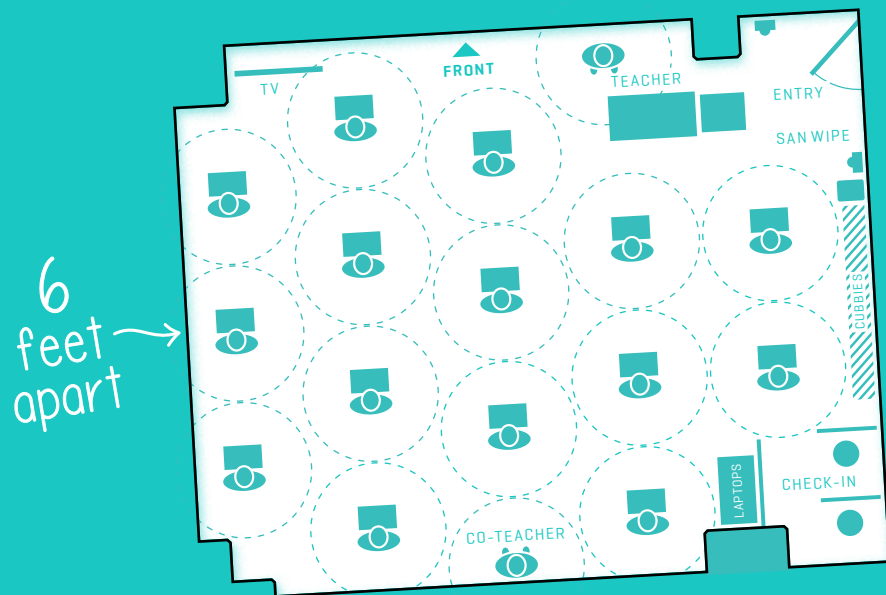
FACE COVERINGS

According to U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) experts, the best way for individuals to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is to wear face coverings that minimize the number of virus particles in the air. At our school, LAB staffers check to make sure every individual who enters the building is wearing a secured face covering that extends to both the mouth and nose. The school provides masks to anyone who does not have one on arrival. Our teachers and staff members have been trained to help scholars adjust their face coverings to wear them correctly.





Distanced classroom layouts



PREVENTING THE SPREAD

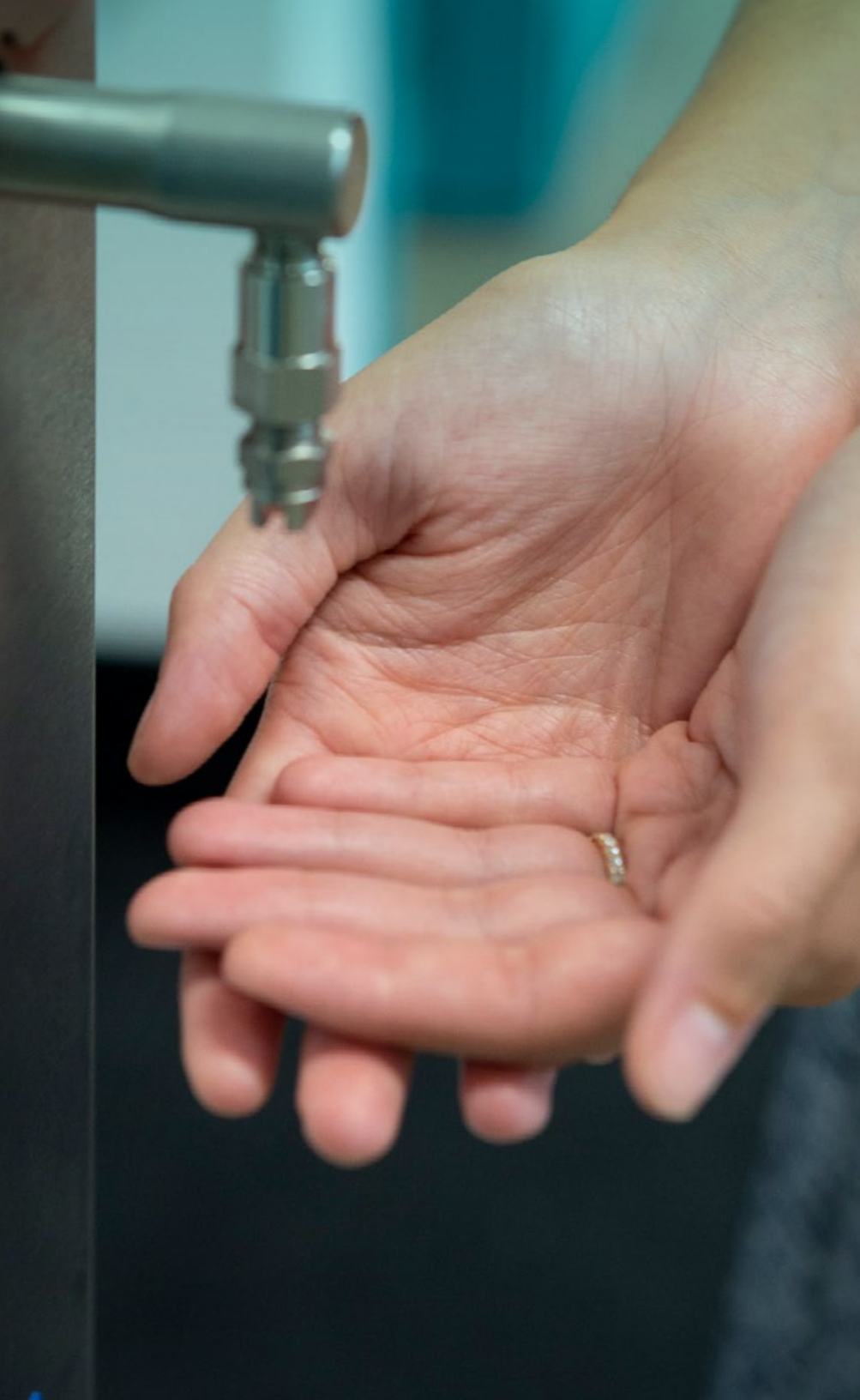
PHYSICAL DISTANCING

According to public health experts, 6 feet is the minimum distance to allow between potential vectors to minimize virus spread.

Since traditional classroom configurations would not support the distance required between students and staff, we first tackled reducing density. We audited our classrooms and listed them in a spreadsheet by room number, name, and square footage. To estimate how many scholars could fit in each room, we divided by a factor larger than 36 square feet to approximate a 6-foot distance per scholar. Once we accounted for the conditions of each room, added a check-in area for each classroom, and provided space for teacher circulation and accessibility clearance, the actual per-person allocation averaged out to about 42 square feet.

Armed with this new occupancy calculation, partners determined that a typical classroom could host a maximum of 15 scholars and one instructor (a typical classroom preCOVID-19 had a capacity of up to 30).

LAB administrators then took the calculations one step further, establishing an updated overall capacity for the 77 Sands Street school building. Since we couldn't accommodate all students in the school at one time, we decided to offer staggered shifts of in-person, brick-and-mortar instruction (more on that later in this guide). We also created annex spaces for scholars to receive certain services, as well as a robust remote learning offering consisting of synchronous and asynchronous instruction, virtual community meetings, town halls, and more.



PREVENTING THE SPREAD

HAND HYGIENE

The final component is hand hygiene, which includes sanitizing hands regularly and washing hands as frequently as possible.

Sanitization is more manageable than handwashing since schools can purchase automatic hand-sanitizer dispensers and distribute them across campus. At LAB, we resolved to have at least one dispenser at each of two hygiene stations in every room, and additional units in hallways to guarantee that scholars would never be more than 35 feet from hand sanitizer at any time during the school day. We also provide dispensers at the new entrance to school (more information later in this guide).

In addition to hand-sanitizer dispensers, we decided to increase access to handwashing stations in public areas throughout the building. In some cases, this meant purchasing new standalone sinks. In other cases, it was as simple as reorganizing the flow of students around the buildings to allow for more restroom time. We also installed soap dispensers and sensor-operated, hands-free technology at faucets. In addition to these measures, LAB increased the frequency of cleaning services around the buildings so that surfaces are cleaned and disinfected more often.

We are also engaging in a regular electrostatic misting process, or "fogging." This is a sanitizing procedure that disinfects surface areas in the classroom that are touched frequently throughout the day. The disinfectant used is effective against many communicable diseases, including coronaviruses, and it is safe for human contact.

PHYSICAL BARRIERS

A supplement to the other strategies is a physical barrier that may help to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We are using plexiglass—a translucent plastic that looks like thick glass, which is often now used at supermarket check-out areas—as a physical barrier designed to stop virus particles in mid-air.

Based on feedback from teachers, who said they prefer to have the barriers on their desks instead of in front of them on the floor, we have provided at least one barrier for teachers in all LAB classrooms. We implemented other barriers in our classrooms in two other ways: to define special semi-private spaces where scholars can check in with their teacher or cool-down in the middle of a lesson and to facilitate closer interactions during one-on-one or small-group settings.

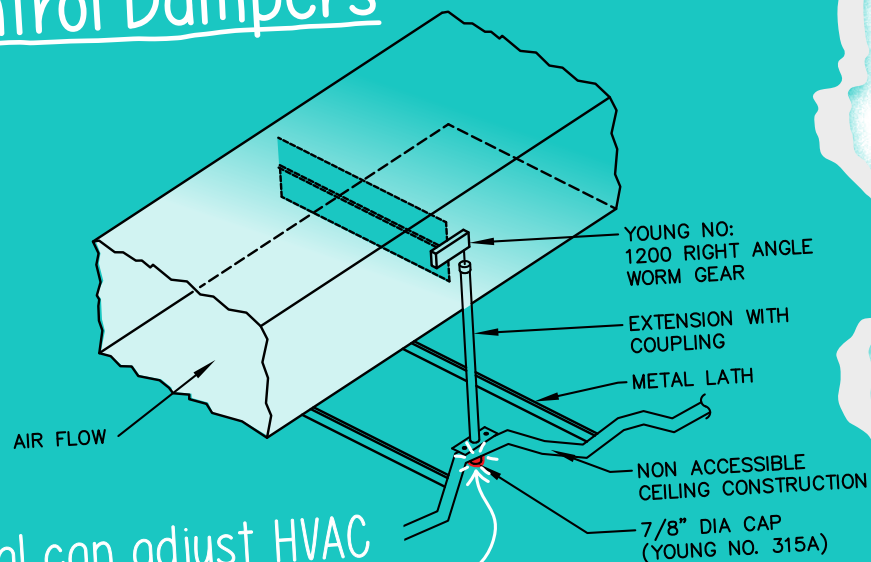
Others considering using plexiglass physical barriers should know that we found supplies were limited due to increased demand.





Air Volume Control Dampers

One of our
adjustments to
improve air flow



Dial can adjust HVAC
system's air output

PREVENTING THE SPREAD

HVAC ASSESSMENT

Air flow is a critical consideration when striving to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Not only did we want to make sure we are moving as much fresh air as possible through our system, we also wanted to maximize ventilation and filtration and equalize distribution. We accomplished this with the landlord in several different ways:

- + replacing existing filters with MERV 13 filters (which catch 90 percent of the smallest particles);
- + changing filters frequently;
- + rebalancing the system to maximize the air flow in each space;
- + adding fresh air;
- + increasing air speed;
- + maintaining humidity between 40 and 60 percent; and
- + sanitizing ducts.

We conducted a thorough audit of our HVAC system to maximize the air exchange rate, so we are now replacing air twice per hour. We worked with engineers to modify our HVAC systems to increase the amount of fresh air they let in. We are also erecting parallel HVAC systems to increase air exchange, and we are setting up a system through which we can temper air for both systems by taking in fresh air from a duct on the roof of the building.

Finally, we engaged in a “load-balancing” process, through which we adjusted our HVAC system to make sure that rooms receive the optimal amount of clean air.

SIGNAGE AND FLOOR GRAPHICS

Signage reminds scholars to be smart about COVID-19 protection: to wear face coverings, keep at least 6 feet of distance from each other, and practice hand hygiene. Many of these signs hang on walls. Others are on the floor so scholars can see where they should be standing and walking to maintain proper distance. The language on these signs is clear, concise, and consistent. We like to think of it as a branding exercise for the new era of prudence and protection.

Signage by Gensler





CONTAINING THE SPREAD

Brooklyn Lab devised a number of strategies to contain the spread of COVID-19, including rethinking arrival routines, redesigning pedestrian flow, establishing a contact-tracing ecosystem, and addressing shared amenities.



CONTAINING THE SPREAD

RETHINKING ARRIVAL ROUTINES AND PROCEDURES

Our most high-profile change to contain the spread of COVID-19 has been a new entrance to the main LAB building at 77 Sands Street. We are calling this our Front Porch—an outdoor lobby that ensures safe entry and exit. LAB created the concept together with Urban Projects Collaborative, SITU, WXY, and Urban Umbrella as part of a larger body of work focused on safe and equitable school reopening under our Equity by Design initiative.

The Front Porch provides a designated space and shelter for new health protocols required for school entry, including temperature and wellness checks and physical distancing. It also features clear graphics for wayfinding and to ensure 6 feet of physical distance as students and staff wait in line for health checks.

In addition to helping us safeguard the health and safety of our school community, the Front Porch also provides welcome relief from inclement weather. The area complements other changes we have made to accommodate pandemic protocols, including staggered scheduling and increased school entry points.

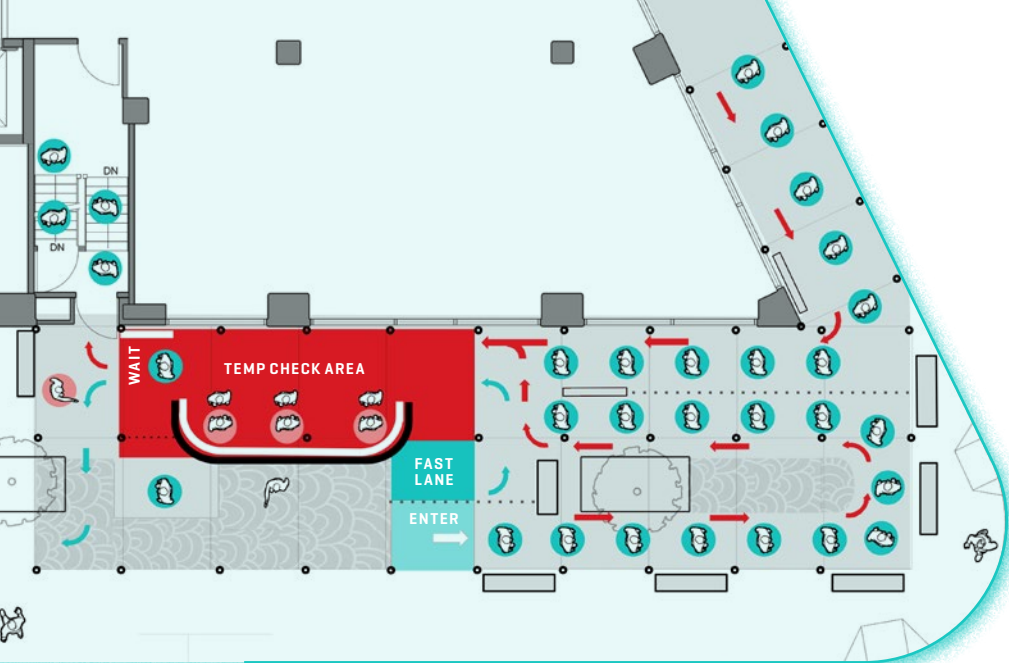
Beyond supporting new safety protocols, our Front Porch was designed as a space that cultivates a sense of well-being and community. We used polycarbonate ceiling panels that allow natural light to filter through, and painted the ground with colorful graphic art that incorporates elements of our school logo. We plan to install student artwork on banners secured to the shed structure, which can be periodically rotated with new art. After the pandemic,

we believe our Front Porch will provide a welcome new space that helps integrate our education buildings into the greater community.

Benjamin Krall, founder and chief executive officer at Urban Umbrella, said that he's "delighted to see that our sidewalk shed alternative ... can be 'hacked' to help create a safe and healthy learning environment for children."

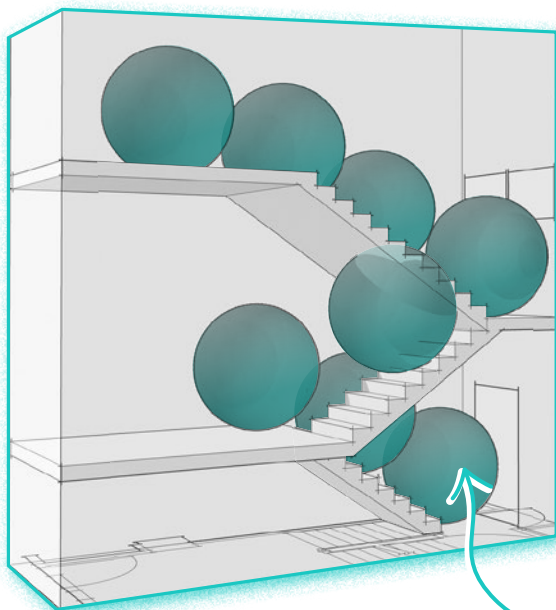
See more about
our Front Porch
project here.





SITU/WXY

↑ We made it safer get into the school... ↑



PSF Projects

...and studied capacities for getting around safely inside.

CONTAINING THE SPREAD

REDESIGNING PEDESTRIAN FLOW AROUND THE BUILDING

Another critical component of our efforts to contain the spread: rethinking how scholars enter our facilities. We approached this in two ways: a staggered schedule and increased entry points.

First, we implemented a staggered schedule designed to reduce the number of people entering, exiting, or moving through our school buildings at any time. We also adopted alternating attendance schedules, so that no more than 50 percent of our scholars are in our three buildings on any given day.

Second, we increased the number of entry points to reduce bottlenecks during arrival and departure periods. We also opened a second stairwell that was not being used by the school prior to the pandemic to facilitate smoother (and physically distanced) ingress and egress. As part of this approach, we implemented staggered arrival and departure times and instituted new protocols for the elevator from the main lobby to the classroom spaces: It is now reserved for those with mobility challenges, and we have limited the number of scholars who can ride the elevator together.

When we tested these approaches in July and August, scholars and staff embraced the new protocols wholeheartedly.

ESTABLISHING A CONTACT TRACING ECOSYSTEM

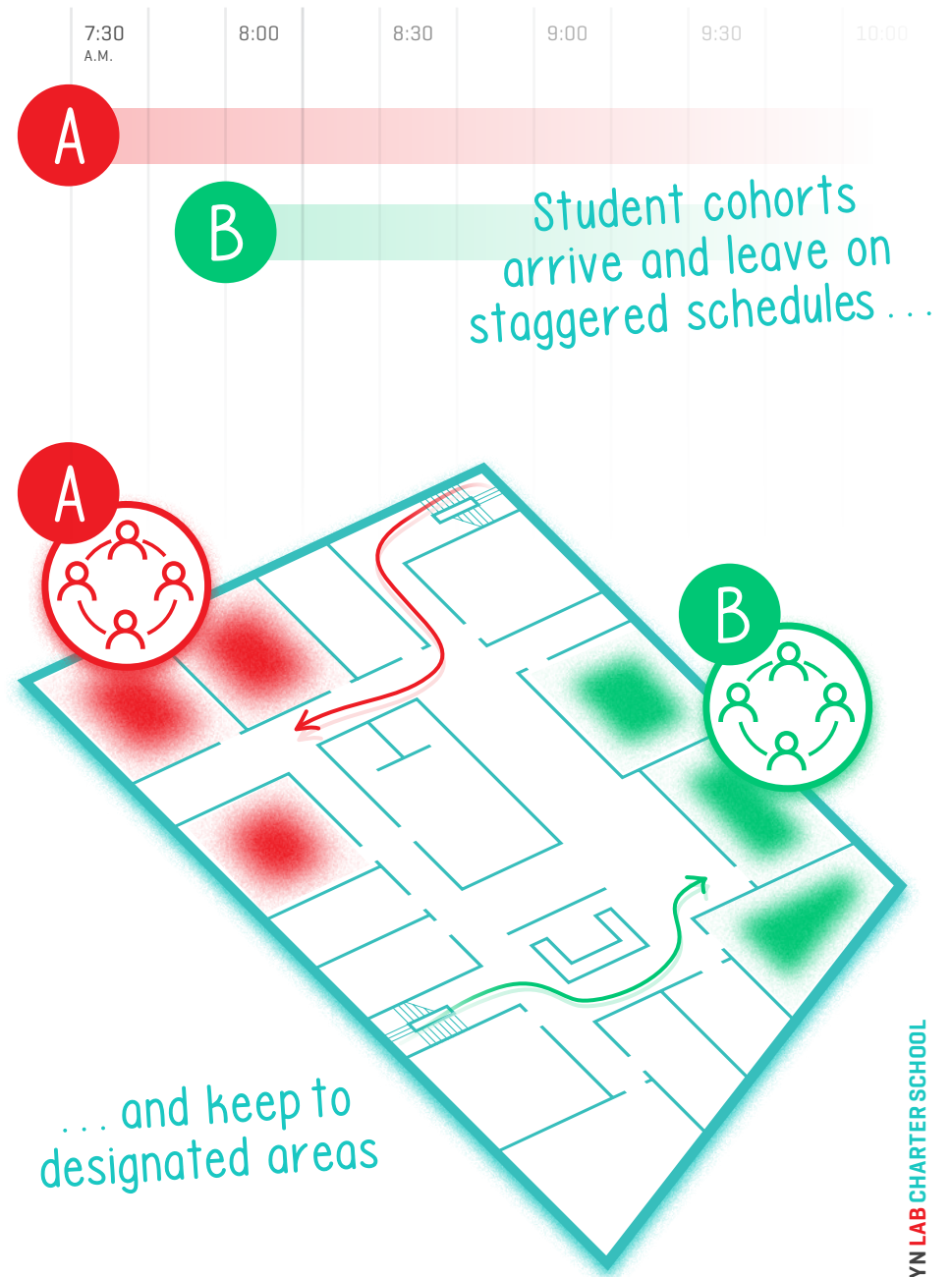
To manage potential COVID-19 outbreaks, LAB addressed some of the limitations to pedestrian flow and implemented our own contact-tracing ecosystem, which is devised to keep scholars separate and keep track of who went where, when.

This approach is predicated on regular health and wellness checks that happen daily when scholars arrive, as well as limited mobility once scholars enter the learning space. Under the new approach, our scholars remain in one or two classrooms throughout the day for instruction and breaks. They also take organized breaks to the restrooms and water fountains.

We also have established scholar cohorts—instructional groupings of scholars who enter the building together and stay together for their time at school. Currently, LAB has assigned specific teachers and paraprofessionals to follow each cohort throughout the day. This means that educators and aides are part of the contact-tracing ecosystem.

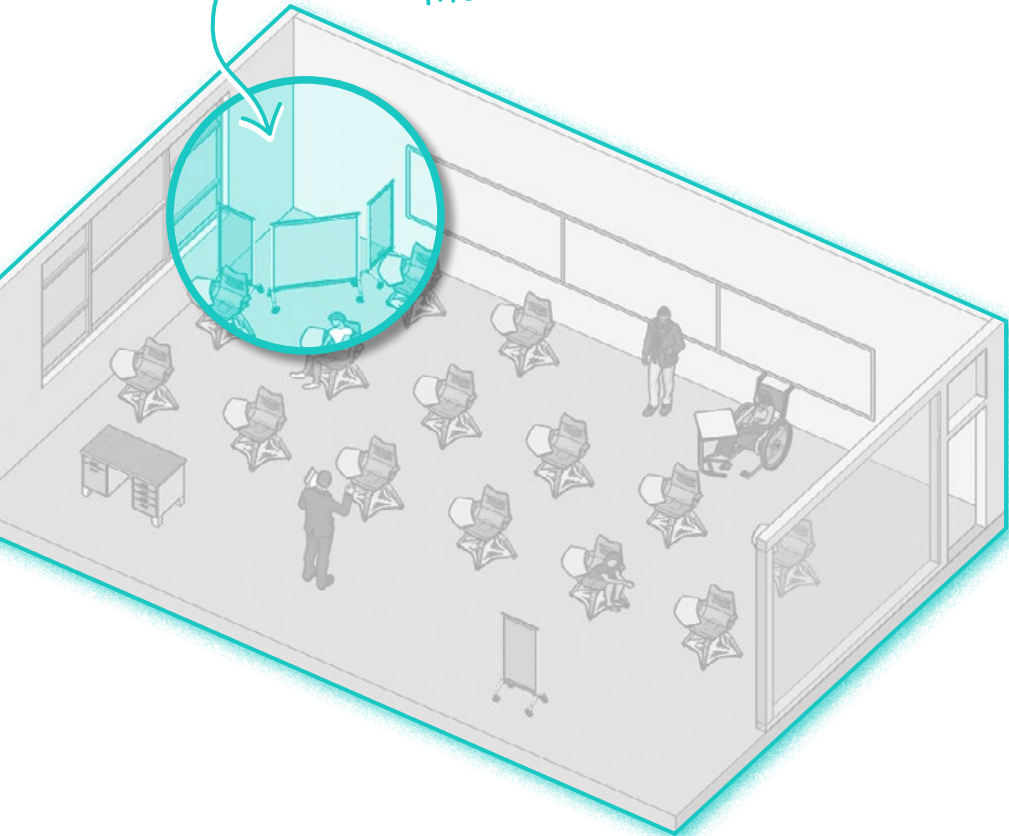
With these precautions in place, if one scholar or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, LAB does not have to shut down the entire school—just the parts of the school that the cohort encountered.

This empowers the school to be surgical and intentional about its virus response.



CREATING COOL-DOWN AREAS

Separate cool-down
area defined by
movable room dividers



LAB is committed to meeting the diverse needs of our scholars. During the high-stress time of a global pandemic, we recognize that our scholars may need time and space to decompress, catch their breath, and hit reset after a challenging moment or situation in class.

To create this space—while containing the spread of COVID-19—we sectioned off a space in every classroom (typically in the back corner) that is bordered by movable, easy-to-clean, transparent barriers. Each cool-down area features two seats and a barrier for conferencing so scholars can tune out everything around them and refocus their energy toward learning. Because these areas are inside the classrooms, they do not impact our contact-tracing ecosystem.

The idea for this feature emerged not as part of our original plan but during the charrette process. One of our partners suggested that we “provide space for mindfulness and self-regulation where students can disconnect, cool down, and re-center.” We refined the feature through focus groups with LAB teachers. It is proof that involving and including experts and constituents in the decision-making process pays huge dividends.

CONTAINING THE SPREAD

DESIGNATING AN ISOLATION/ QUARANTINE ROOM

We have created a special waiting room for scholars and/or staff members suspected of having the virus after standard wellness checks. A sign outside the room makes its purpose clear: “Quarantine Area: Please follow instructions from staff.” It will be managed by a staff member who serves in an isolation coordinator role, employing personal protective equipment (PPE) and public health practices.

Even though our quarantine room is located inside our main facility, its standalone HVAC system is designed to seal it off from the rest of the building. The HVAC system is based on a negative pressure system that works like a giant vacuum. The room has a separate fresh-air intake and direct exhaust to the outside world. Any particles that suspected COVID-19 carriers exhale into the room are immediately sucked out.

We have created processes to minimize anyone’s time in the isolation room, and we have located the room close to a stairwell.

Signage by Gensler





CONTAINING THE SPREAD

OUTFITTING ANNEXES FOR THE UNEXPECTED

Given our strict new arrival process, we created a new space to accommodate scholars who arrive late and miss the morning entry procedures that are set up within the Front Porch. We also want to be prepared when scholars are confused by our staggered scheduling and arrive on the wrong shift or wrong day.

To accommodate unexpected scheduling events and related needs for space, we have created special annexes on every floor. Each is easily accessed by the main entry staircase. After checking in with reception, the scholar can proceed to the annex until additional accommodation can be made for them to reconnect with their cohort. All the annexes implement the same health and safety measures we have instituted elsewhere in the building.

CONTAINING THE SPREAD

ADDRESSING SHARED AMENITIES

Finally, we recognize that there will always be several shared amenities to monitor, and we are committed to minimizing the potential for spread of COVID-19 in those spaces. Some of these areas include restrooms, stairwells, and our reception/lobby area, which is still open but operating at a reduced capacity.

Here, our approach revolves around two key activities: strategic use and rigorous sanitization.

We strive to stagger when we cycle scholars through these shared spaces, and we try to build in enough time after each use to clean. When the spaces are not in use, we deploy sanitation teams with electrostatic misters and wipes.

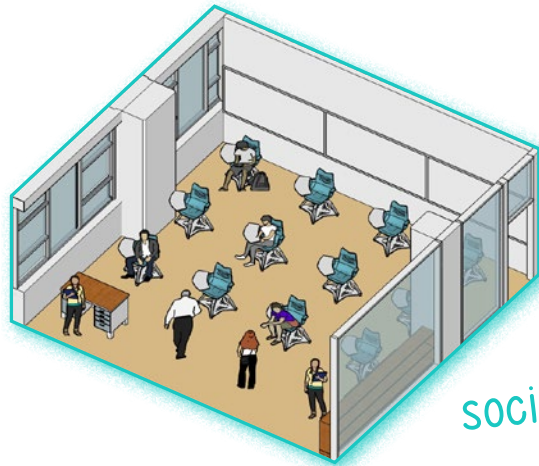


CONTINUING **TO LEARN**

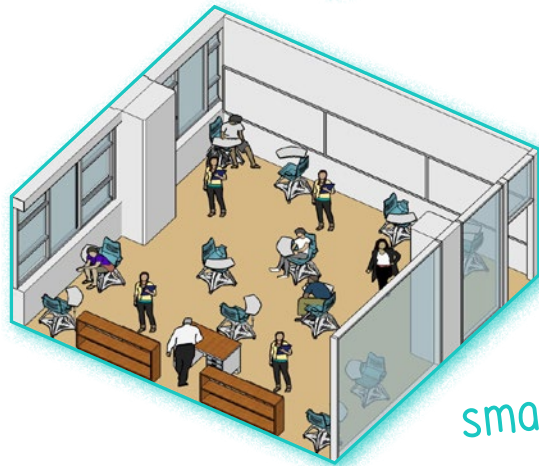
Our new approaches to facilitate learning and continually improve include reconfiguring classrooms, developing a cadre of adults who will serve as scholar success coaches, and empowering staff members to be ambassadors of our new identity.

CONTINUING TO LEARN

RECONFIGURING CLASSROOMS



socially distanced



small groups



paired rooms

We realized early in our journey that a one-size-fits-all approach to classroom configuration would not work for the kind of educational style we espouse at LAB. We explored different configurations for different types of instruction, including some for classes that require additional service providers. Ultimately, we worked with partners to create a set of universal templates for inclusive co-teaching classrooms that illustrate a variety of instructional groupings. These templates accommodate a variety of learning scenarios.

With templates in hand, we then worked with partners to create color-coded diagrams that can guide teachers and students on how to reconfigure classroom layouts. In some cases, we applied these diagrams directly to the classroom floors. One of our partners likened this approach to the different-colored lines on a gymnasium floor that correlate to different games.

In conjunction with these changes, we took Steelcase student desks that previously had been outfitted with caster wheels and purchased replacement glides instead. Teachers considered this to be “de-mobilizing” the furniture; even though glides facilitate reconfiguration of the room, they are far less mobile than casters.



CONTINUING **TO LEARN**

DEVELOPING SUCCESS COACHES

Given the financial and health challenges created by COVID-19, as well as ongoing racial violence and oppression, it was clear to us from the beginning of our reopening journey that scholars would need one-on-one support in a variety of learning contexts, including in-person, remote, and hybrid.

To meet this need, we are building a team of adults who work with Brooklyn LAB scholars to serve as success coaches—trusted, loving, caregivers who can guide each student in diverse learning environments. Ultimately, these success coaches ensure students have the physical, social, and emotional supports they need to achieve their learning goals.

Success coaches help students tackle just about everything, from school work to their anxieties, concerns, and insecurities. We like to think of success coaches as personal guidance counselors for our scholars. The idea is that every adult plays the role of advocate.

This is uncharted territory for our school, so we called upon partners—including Turnaround for Children, Transcend, City Year, The Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University, The Forum for Youth Investment, EL Education, Community Success Institute, and Dezudio—to help compile the Success Coaching Playbook. This playbook uses research-based frameworks to build a multitiered system of supports, protocols, and resources to help success coaches work with youth one on one and in small-group settings. We are excited to implement these strategies in the school year ahead.

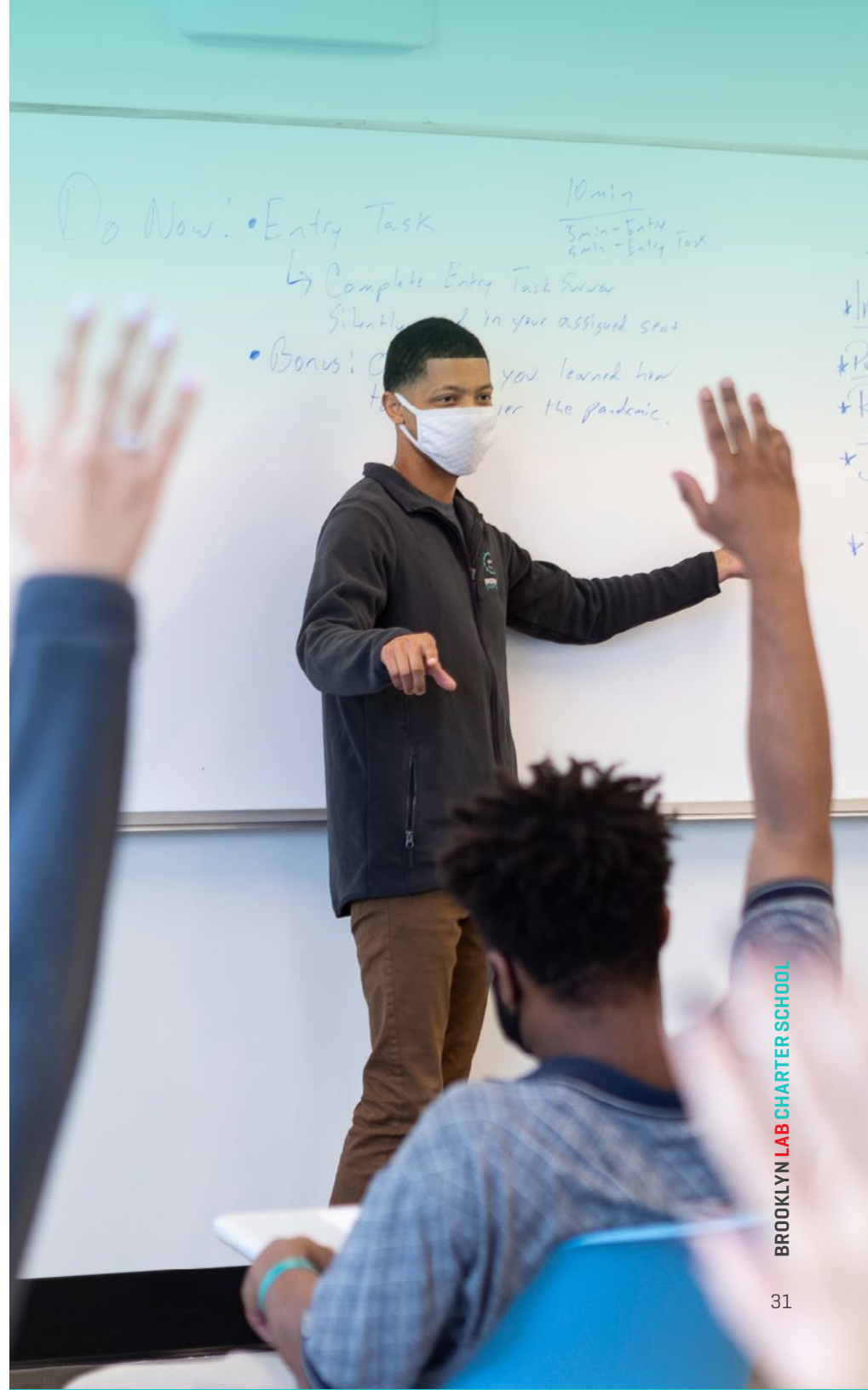
CONTINUING TO LEARN

EMPOWERING STAFF MEMBERS TO BE ADVOCATES

It will take time for our school community to adjust to the many changes we have made, and we are working with our teachers and staff members to become ambassadors of our new approach. We know people will have legitimate fears about returning to the school setting during a pandemic, and we are helping our staff members understand and feel comfortable with our new procedures and schedules so they, in turn, can help students and families feel comfortable. We also want our whole school community to feel they can share their worries, questions, and any experiences with our staff so we can work to meet their needs.

We are doing this in several ways. First, we are working with educators and staff to understand any concerns or misgivings they have about brick-and-mortar school in the time of COVID-19. We are taking time to talk with them about the real changes we have made to our facilities, schedules, and procedures that are intended to uphold the highest standard of safety. We are also creating accessible, easy-to-read resources and other artifacts about our new protocols for our people to share with parents and others. Finally, we are encouraging our staff to share their own journeys with both parents and prospective community members, and we are making sure our staff are available to listen, have conversations about, and respond to any concerns that arise.

In a time of great uncertainty about the future of school, and great changes within our school, we are dedicated to opening up more communication channels across our staff.



MOVING **FORWARD**

In our process to safeguard the health and safety of our school community, we consulted dozens of experts, listened to hundreds of parents, and surveyed scholars, teachers, and staff members. These conversations are ongoing.



MOVING **FORWARD**

RELEASE PLANS AND SOLICIT FEEDBACK

As a school that anchors our approach in design thinking, we strive to honor input from diverse stakeholders, fulfill the needs of all learners, and collaborate on tough challenges—and this means our plan will change dynamically, based on both experience and ongoing feedback.

Over the first few months of the 2020-2021 school year, we intend to release our plans and solicit feedback from three groups of constituents:

- + *insiders (parents, teachers, staff members, and scholars);*
- + *outsiders (education experts, architects, urban designers, and engineers); and*
- + *public health experts.*

While we may not incorporate every piece of feedback we receive, we intend to listen intently and carefully consider every suggestion, just as we have from the beginning of this process.

←
Watch our video

MOVING **FORWARD**

CONTINUALLY ENGAGE WITH STAFF AND FAMILIES

We will also continue to engage the core constituents who matter most to us—the parents, teachers, staff members, and scholars (the “insiders” group on the previous page)—through more focus groups, town halls, and conversations. We will be in constant communication.

We recognize there are parents, teachers, and staff members who still are not entirely comfortable with the idea of brick-and-mortar school amid a global pandemic. We want to hear from them about their concerns, and we will continually reevaluate our approach to ensure it is addressing their worries from a public health perspective.

Since Preparation Academy (our student summer orientation) at LAB began on August 19, we have been reassessing protocols regularly and revising our strategies accordingly to maximize the health and safety of our community.

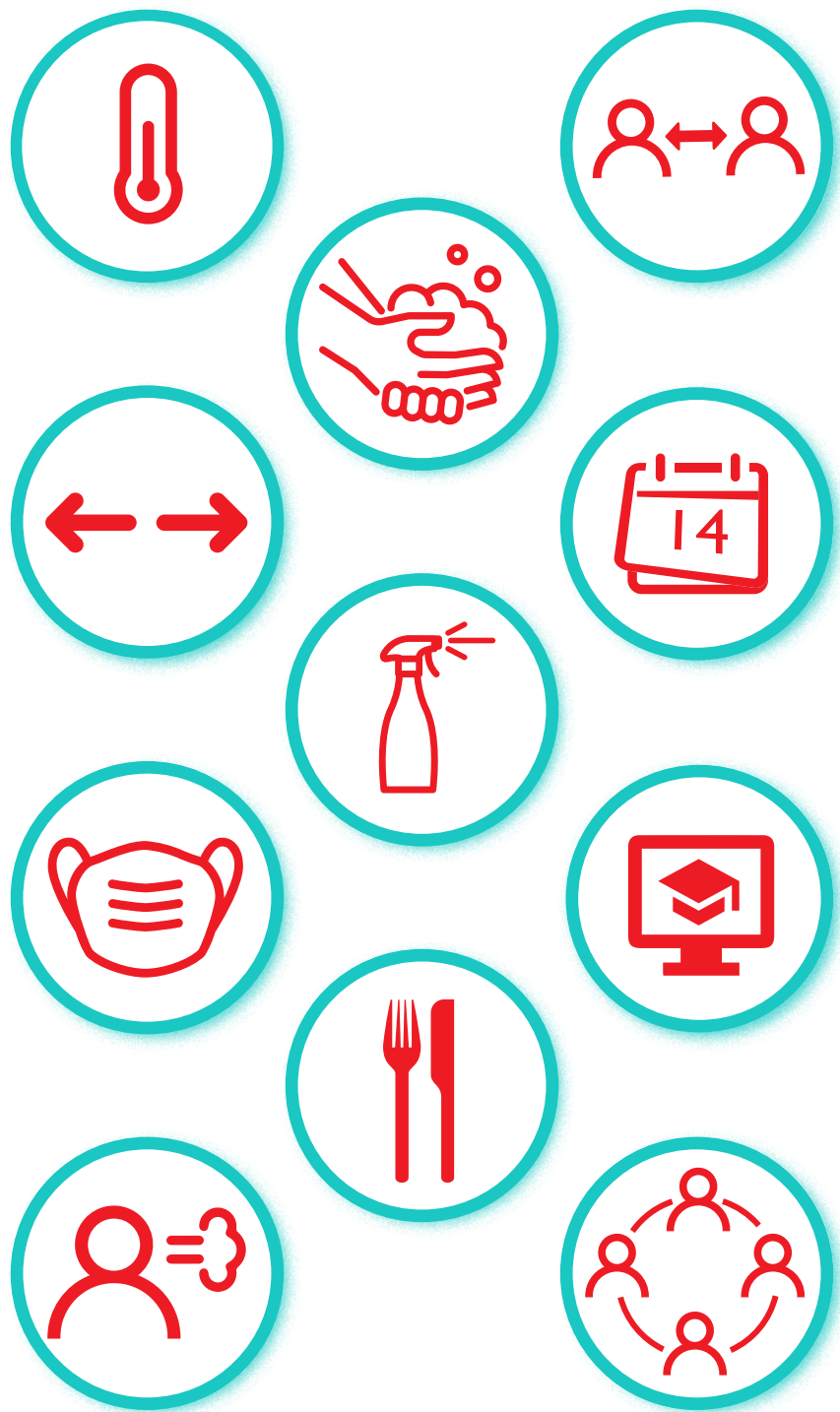
Will there be any heating/warming stations for outdoor entry spaces for when the weather is very cold?

Who will be asked to supervise scholar lunches?

How are you planning to disinfect the school?

How will the school prevent airborne spread of COVID-19?

Can parents volunteer to help with sanitation stations, enforcing mask wearing, etc...?



MOVING **FORWARD**

LEVERAGE VISUAL EXPLANATION

We're developing visual language to clarify components of the back-to-school process, and looking at how to ensure our plans communicate expectations clearly to all. One of the ways we're aiming to accomplish this goal: a COVID-19 K12 Equitable Response Open Iconography Library. As the name suggests, this is a library of icons that relate to safety in the COVID-19 era. The icons became important to us during our planning process as we safeguarded the school. With this library, we are sharing them openly in the hopes that other schools might adopt them as well. We are not just making these icons available to be nice; instead, we are sharing them to advance a broader conversation about school safety by introducing important questions, proposing potential solutions, and defining the new concepts we need to discuss and make improvements.

Download our
Iconography
Library

MOVING **FORWARD**

REGULARLY EVALUATE WHAT IS WORKING

Down the road, we will continue to evaluate our approach to see what is working, what isn't, and what we can do better. To do this in a meaningful way, we will need to convey to our constituents a broad understanding of who on our team owns what, and who is responsible for process improvements at every step. For this, we will continue to engage the same partners who helped us develop these protocols.

1. HEED REGULATORY POLICIES



2. ENGAGE OUR COMMUNITY

Before
school
starts



Staff

Students

Families

Teachers

After
school
starts



3. IMPLEMENT SUGGESTIONS

Communication
Socialization
Implementation
Monitoring
+ Evaluation



CONCLUSION

Our goal with this guide has been to codify and share lessons from our journey to safeguard our school community's health so other schools can learn from our process, planning, and approach.

Education is one of the many aspects of life that looks vastly different against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. At LAB, we have accepted the new reality, but we remain committed to implementing a brick-and-mortar school because we know the value of educating scholars face-to-face. Beyond the benefits of learning, the safe reopening of schools prevents possible harm in the forms of learning loss, nutritional insecurity, and lack of access to services. In-person school also supports scholars' social and emotional well-being.

We remain steadfast in our commitments to serving the highest need scholars and maximizing wellness and health. Right now, we believe the best way for us to deliver on these promises is to create an environment where learning can happen safely. As others follow this same path, we hope this guide becomes a resource and reference for all.



BROOKLYN LAB **CHARTER SCHOOL**

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*Zahida Aminy, Middle School Director
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FRIENDS OF BROOKLYN LAB CHARTER SCHOOLS

*Tiffany Kimmel Carlin, Architect in Residence
Sarah Pactor, Senior Project Associate*

InnovateEDU

*Kate Cochran, Chief of Staff
Erin Mote, Executive Director*

WRITER

Matt Villano

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Robert Bolesta

PHOTOGRAPHER

Ethan Covey Photography

EDITORIAL CONSULTANT

Eva Dienel

URBAN PROJECTS COLLABORATIVE

*Tricia Forrest, Partner & Project Manager
Sarah Haga, Partner & Principal
Idalia Ferreras, Assistant Project Manager
Marleny Heredia, Assistant Project Manager
Mia Narell, Project Manager*

GENSLER

*Mark Thaler
Sean Auyeung
Joanne Fernando
Santiago Rivera*

PBDW ARCHITECTS

*James Seger, Partner
Serena Losonczy, Associate Partner
Erica Gaswirth, Senior Associate
Kylee Pierce
Daniel Schumacher*

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*Barrett Feldman
Mark Sofield
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*Claire Weisz
Adam Lubinsky
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Cara Michell
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Raphael Laude*

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*Benjamin Krall
Melissa Schwartz
Ashley Feldman
Paul DeFeo
Spencer Beattie
Leanne Iverson
Nicole Jodoin*