

Based upon the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) updated [K-12 school guidance](#), which reflects the [latest science](#) on physical distance between students in classrooms, Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) now recommends that, **with universal masking**, students should maintain a distance of at least 3 feet in classroom settings. Setting specific guidance includes the following:

- In elementary schools, CDC recommends all students remain at least 3 feet apart in classrooms where mask use is universal — regardless of whether community transmission is low, moderate, substantial, or high.
- In middle and high schools, CDC also recommends students should be at least 3 feet apart in classrooms where mask use is universal and in communities where transmission is low, moderate, or substantial.
- Middle school students and high school students should be at least 6 feet apart in communities where transmission is high, if cohorting is not possible.
- CDC continues to recommend at least 6 feet of distance:
 - Between adults in the school building and between adults and students.
 - In common areas, such as school lobbies and auditoriums.
 - When masks can’t be worn, such as when eating.
 - During activities when increased exhalation occurs, such as singing, shouting, band practice, sports, or exercise. These activities should be moved outdoors or to large, well-ventilated spaces whenever possible.
 - In community settings outside of the classroom.
- The definition of a [close contact](#) is someone who was within 6 feet of a person diagnosed with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24 hour period. The definition of a close contact applies regardless of whether either person was wearing a mask.
- For schools that use less than 6 feet between students in classrooms, the definition of close contacts should not change. Students sitting less than 6 feet next to another student or person diagnosed with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more should quarantine at home and be referred for testing.

CDC’s community risk classifications are nearly identical to Louisiana’s based on the indicators and thresholds utilized for categorization. CDC assigned different names to the risk categories than Louisiana, but they are aligned as follows:

Community Transmission Levels	
CDC	Louisiana
Low	Lower
Moderate	Moderate
Substantial	High
High	Higher

* LA community risk by parish data can be found on the first page of the [LDH COVID dashboard](#)