

# THE PARABOLA PROJECT

MINIMIZING RISKS WHILE MAXIMIZING LEARNING DURING COVID-19

*In 2020, Ariadne Labs and The Learning Accelerator launched the Parabola Project to provide education leaders with actionable guidance, tools, and strategies to understand and minimize health risks while maximizing learning and wellness during COVID-19.*

## THE CHALLENGE

In 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic intensified, schools throughout the U.S. rapidly pivoted to online learning modalities to minimize personal contact in hopes of curbing the spread of the disease. This switch had far-reaching impacts, from lost learning opportunities to decreased access to meals and other services provided at school. As school leaders considered if and how to reopen for in-person learning, they had to weigh the health and safety implications for students, teachers, staff, and the community as a whole. School leaders needed help translating federal and state reopening guidance into clear, evidence-informed, actionable implementation options.

School administrators and education leaders, faced with creating plans to more safely reopen schools for in-person learning, needed to understand public health parameters and how to translate those into concrete, actionable steps that balanced the needs of students for quality education with the known risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

## THE SOLUTION

In the summer of 2020, Ariadne Labs, The Learning Accelerator, and the One8 Foundation launched the [Parabola Project](#) to provide education leaders with actionable guidance, tools, and strategies to understand and minimize risks while maximizing learning and wellness during COVID-19. The Parabola team identified [nine core public health principles](#) to guide strategies for safer school reopenings. Using input from health and education professionals, the team collaborated with nine school districts in Massachusetts to pilot a [School Reopening Readiness Guide](#), designed to assist district and school leaders in developing, evaluating, revising, and executing operational plans to reopen schools for in-person learning. The guide took into account federal and state guidance, resources, logistics, COVID-19 infection rates, and risk factors that varied with local contexts. The team created a series of [tools](#), using evidence-informed information on effective [communication strategies](#), [spacing](#), [mask culture](#), [air quality assessment](#), and other topics. Both the guide and the tools were offered free on the Parabola website. Resources were updated with the newest information on COVID-19, and with insights from school district partners that reopened with documented safety measures and procedures.

## OUR IMPACT

As of December 2020, the Parabola Project has impacted more than 53,000 students and teachers. It was endorsed by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, shared with more than 340 school districts in Massachusetts, and used by others across the U.S.

*“I knew of no other resource out there that was even attempting to provide leadership teams with a framework or a roadmap for approaching this... Parabola was a coherent, pretty comprehensive, high-level framework to work with.”*

*-School Principal*