

How to Create a Safer, More Informed School with Digital Signage

A simple guide to creating a safe and healthy school environment in the wake of COVID-19



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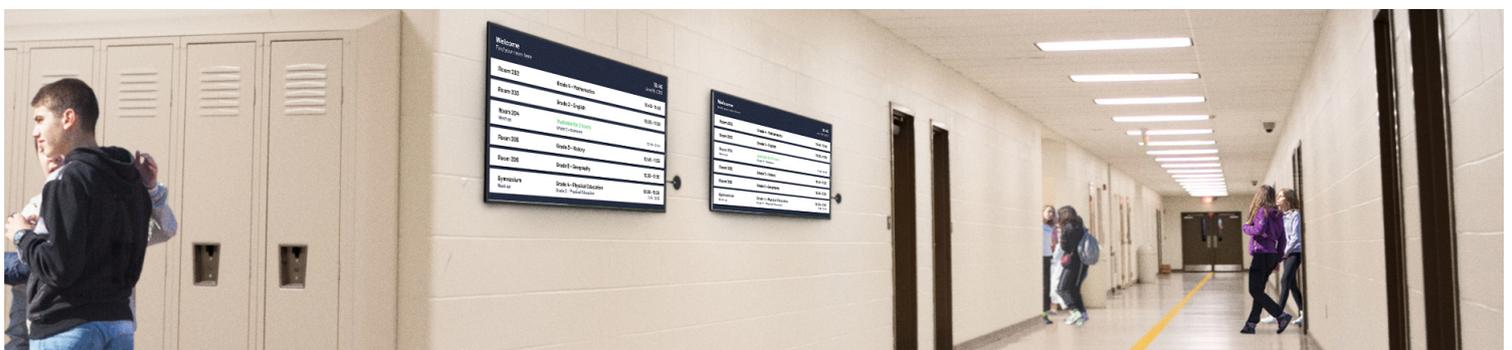
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A need for increased safety and awareness

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on education around the world, with most governments temporarily closing schools and universities for extended periods of time in an effort to contain the virus. These global closures have impacted [91%](#) of the world's student population – that's over 1 billion learners. The comparatively small number of schools that haven't shut have had to significantly increase standard health and safety procedures, to limit the spread of infection and keep students and teachers safe.

As the world continues to grapple with COVID-19 and, over the coming months, schools work towards reopening, the way they operate will change dramatically for the foreseeable future. Schools will be required to put health and safety at the forefront of all operations and communication, and implement stringent measures to limit the spread of the virus. The key challenge that schools will need to overcome as they reopen is timely, efficient communication of health and safety messages, while minimizing disruption to students' learning experiences as much as possible.

One tool educators should embrace during and in the wake of the Coronavirus Crisis is digital signage. This ebook addresses the ways digital signage can be used to help create a safer, healthier school environment, by keeping the entire school community up to date with the latest information and guidelines.



Introduction to digital signage



What is digital signage?

In its simplest form, digital signage describes the sharing of information or content via one or more digital displays, and is often used to communicate a message with a specific audience or group of people.

There are multiple advantages of digital signage, but two of the most [widely](#) acknowledged include:

- The information shown on screen is dynamic rather than static, which means the user has the potential to be exposed to a variety of different messages at different locations and points in time
- The on-screen content can be programmed remotely from one single source, allowing messages to be updated in real-time for different purposes

Because of the visual and real-time nature of digital signage, and the accessibility of digital displays, it has grown rapidly as a form of communication and information sharing in recent years. In fact, the global digital signage market size was valued at [\\$17.23 billion USD in 2018](#), and is projected to reach \$32.12 billion by 2026. [Market research](#) has projected the global digital signage education market to reach \$1.7 billion USD by 2021.

While schools face unforeseen expenses brought on by COVID-19, investment in digital signage should remain top of mind. Especially for educational institutions with access to funding allocated specifically to technology. The following section explains why.

How can it be used in education?

Within education, digital signage offers a

unique, cost-effective means of [keeping students engaged](#), as well as informed with relevant information. It is increasingly seen by educators as a vital tool to keep students, teachers, as well as parents and other visitors up to date about what is happening in the school community. It also takes the pressure off IT admins and heads of staff, providing them with an easy, resource-friendly way to get important messages out to students, teachers and families in real-time, without the hassle of traditional newsletters and online portals. Generally speaking, digital signage provides educators with the opportunity to:

- **Spread awareness:** Keep students, teachers and families informed with the latest news, achievements and milestones
- **Share ownership:** Provide staff and students with access to change digital signage around campus, giving them the opportunity to have input and ownership
- **Nurture a sense of community:** Showcase imagery and messages that celebrate performances, sporting events and impressive school results
- **Offer guidance:** Clearly display class timetables, lunch menus, a map of the school building or emergency procedures

How can digital signage be used during and post-lockdown?

Digital signage is increasingly being used at colleges, universities and K-12 schools as a form of emergency messaging. When facing a health crisis, the ability to provide clear instructions and updates in real-time and en masse is crucial. This is particularly true of governments and educators who hold a



level of responsibility for the health of staff and students in school environments. Digital signage provides an opportunity to present updated messages in real-time, communicating the importance of personal hygiene, the signs and symptoms of Coronavirus, and specific procedures students, staff, parents and visitors should follow.

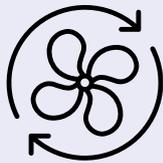
Some of the benefits of embracing digital signage during COVID-19 include:

- **Be prepared:** Pre-prepare any COVID-19-related messaging and signage ahead of time to ensure you are ready for students and staff to return to school.
- **Reach a lot of people, quickly:** Whether you're a school of 250 or 2500, and trying to reach students in classrooms, teachers in the staffroom or parents in pickup zones, installing digital signage

around different areas of the school allows you to communicate with a large volume of people simultaneously.

- **Share updates in real-time:** In today's health climate, health and safety guidelines are constantly being updated. Ensure you can keep up with changing information by sharing updates in real-time, rather than relying solely on more time consuming, manual methods of information sharing such as school billboards or newsletters.
- **Create a sense of order and calm:** Digital signage is certainly useful for sharing practical information, such as reminding students to wash their hands. But it is also useful in creating a sense of calm. Reassure students by sharing information about who they should go to if they feel unwell or have any questions.

Setting up an effective digital signage strategy



In its simplest form, using digital signage in education during COVID-19 is effectively utilizing an additional communication channel to share health and safety messages with the school community. This may include any combination of students, teachers, staff, parents, guardians and visitors.

According to [Kelsen](#), “Creating content for digital signage is no different from creating content for any other screen. It takes thought, process, and strategy to create compelling, effective content. With digital signage, content (with relevance), is king. The power of digital signage is delivering creative, compelling content that is relevant to viewers.”

But before you dive head first into formulating content that is relevant and engaging, it’s imperative to spend some time deciphering what your digital signage strategy is. Your strategy will help clarify exactly what content is needed, and should be the thread that ties all of your digital signage messages together.

[Schaeffler](#) notes that providing “the right message, at the right time, to the right audience, can and should motivate the audience to do things that they otherwise would never have done.” If you spend some time thinking about the following, you’ll be on your way to forming a digital signage strategy that encourages everyone in the school community to prioritize health and safety during COVID-19 and into the future.

What do you want to communicate?

Perhaps the most important of all steps when deciphering your digital signage strategy is distilling exactly what message you are trying to communicate. In the case of COVID-19, you may want to remind students about ways they can help minimize the spread of infection according to the [World Health Organization](#), such as washing hands frequently, avoiding touching eyes, nose or mouth and practicing respiratory hygiene.

Who are you trying to communicate with?

Clarify exactly who you want to share your message with. School communities are made up of a variety of individuals with different purposes when it comes to education. There are principles, department heads and teachers, whose role it is to not only educate, but provide students with a safe and engaging space to learn. There are the students themselves, who are trying to learn and require guidance. Finally, there are parents, guardians and visitors, who often like to be kept informed. During and in the wake of COVID-19, you may wish to tweak your message, based on which of these groups you are communicating with. For example, the safety message you share with a kindergarten student will likely vary somewhat from the message you share with a parent or guardian picking their child up from school.

How do you want to communicate?

Once you've clarified who you're communicating with, it's time to determine which medium they are likely to engage with best. For example, a fifth grader might be more likely to respond to a reminder to wash their hands and cough into their elbow if it is accompanied with some colourful icons or images. Often, a combination of text and imagery – whether it be through static images or video – is effective when it comes to digital signage. The most important thing is that it's interesting and will allow you to get your message across effectively.

Where do you want to communicate it?

Placement of digital signage is extremely important, particularly when it comes to promoting health and safety messages. Aside from the obvious classrooms and lecture halls, it's important to consider areas where students tend to gather, including cafeterias, restrooms, dormitories and gymnasiums. When it comes to reaching staff and visiting guardians, spaces such as staffrooms, front offices and pickup zones should also be considered.

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Setting up effective digital signage within specific school environments



When it comes to sharing safety messages, it's important to over-communicate in order to nudge students and staff to adopt the correct behavior. We've all seen examples of posters around classrooms and noticeboards in school hallways, but as the situation continues to evolve and guidelines change overnight, these traditional forms of communication are no longer scalable. The way forward is to utilize already existing equipment such as TV screens, together with digital signage to share important information in a more dynamic, flexible way.

From classrooms to libraries to cafeterias, schools are made up of different areas that serve separate purposes and require particular guidelines to be communicated. There are many ways digital signage can be used within these environments to increase safety and awareness for students, teachers and the wider school community.

Classrooms

Students and teachers spend the majority of their time in classrooms. Here are some ways digital signage can help ensure they're as safe as possible.

Use a classroom schedule to create order and focus

After attending virtual classes from home for several weeks, many students will find it difficult to adjust back to a regular class schedule, while also upholding health and safety measures. Using [Homescreen](#) on Airtame Cloud Plus, customize your Homescreen to share the main priorities of the lesson and remind students of any safety protocol that must be adhered to, such as keeping a safe distance from each other and prompting them to use Airtame to present wirelessly without the need to pass around any cables or dongles. Providing a clear breakdown of the lesson structure will encourage better focus and help ensure the class starts and finishes on time. You can also adjust the image shown on Homescreen as a visual reminder of the safe behavior that is expected of them in the classroom.

Share school-specific safety instructions

While common practices such as social distancing and increased personal hygiene are being universally adopted during COVID-19, each school is likely to have its own specific safety measures in place, according to government recommendations. Using a tailored [Google Slide](#) deck or your school [website](#), you can

remind students of the safety procedures they need to follow both inside and outside the classroom, such as what to do if they feel unwell.

Keep students aware of relevant safety information with imagery

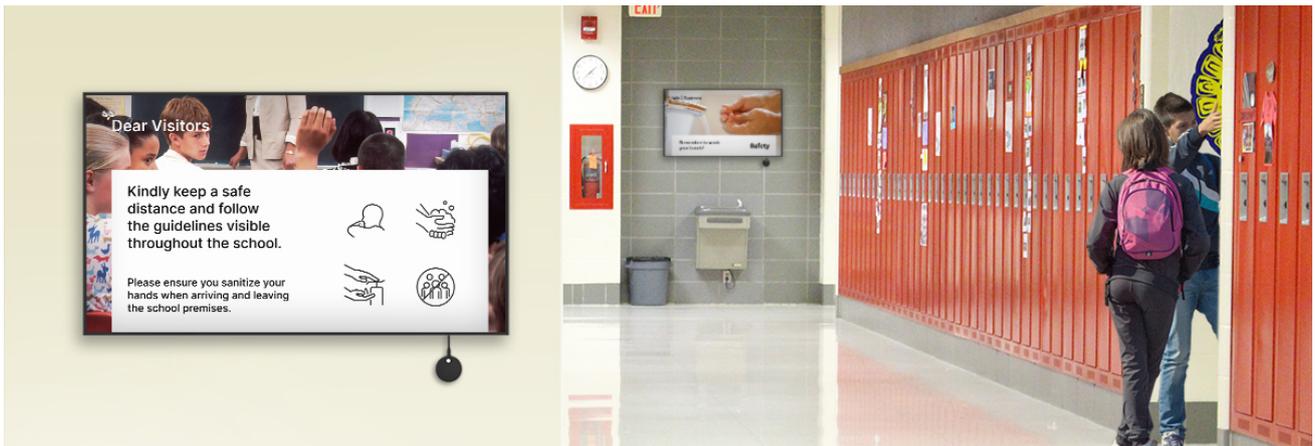
Often, a combination of imagery is effective in catching students' attention when it comes to digital signage in the classroom. The most important consideration is that what is shown on screen is clear and will allow you to get your message across effectively. For example, the [World Health Organization](#) provides downloadable materials that can be saved to [Dropbox](#) or [Microsoft Onedrive](#) and uploaded to a screen in the classroom. There is also the option to play [YouTube videos](#) in the background, or stream YouTube Live, to keep students informed when it comes to personal hygiene and safety during COVID-19.

Remind students of support services

Part of maintaining a healthy and safe school environment is ensuring students feel well supported as they return to the classroom. Use digital signage to create visual reminders of school initiatives, such as before or after school tutorials to assist with homework, reminders about school counselling services and online resources that can help during exam periods.

Common areas

Referring to any shared spaces where students and staff are likely to gather, common areas can range from cafeterias and libraries to hallways and reception areas.

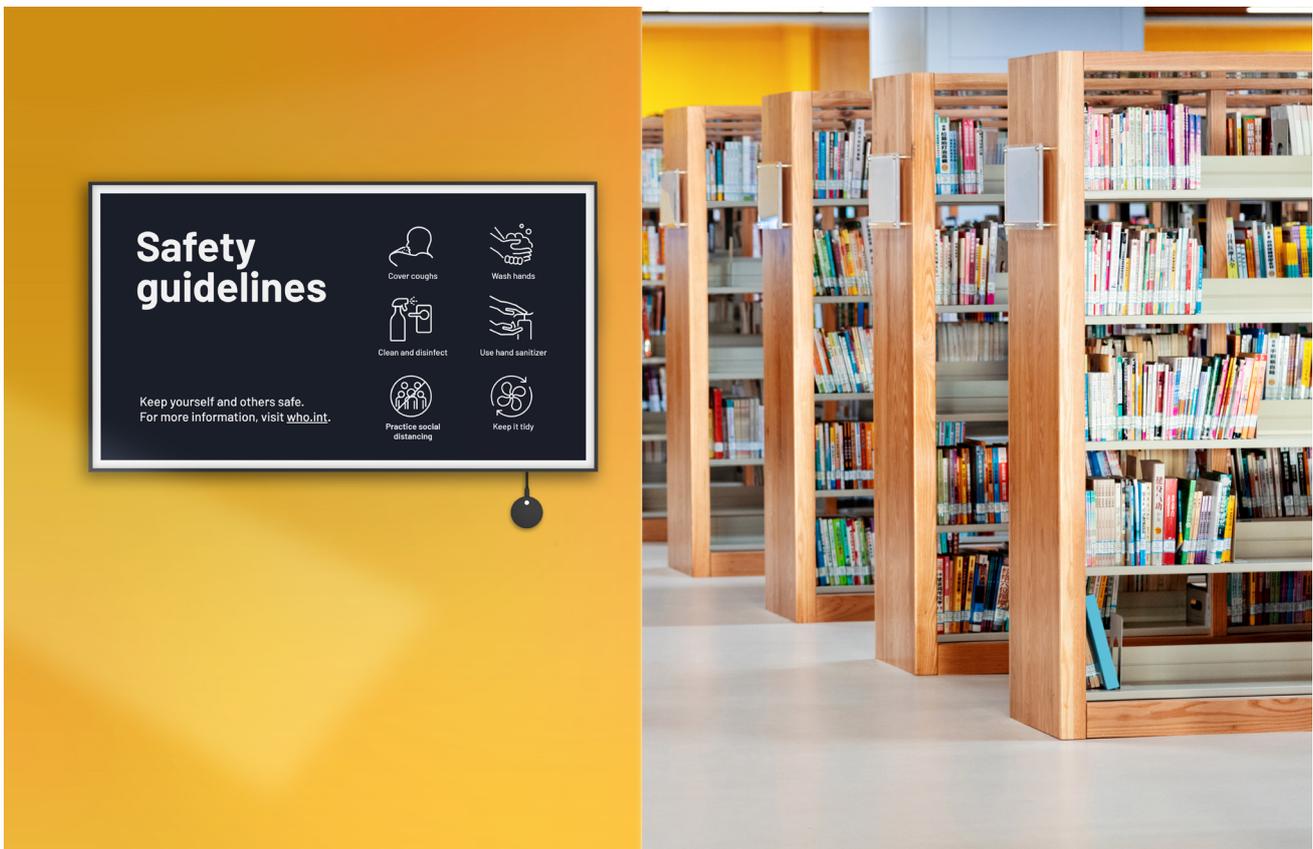


Emphasize the importance of hygiene in cafeterias, libraries, gymnasiums and hallways

Whether it's the school cafeteria, library, gymnasium or simply a hallway, there are many common areas around schools where people tend to congregate. Digital signage is a great way to remind people of specific safety guidelines within these spaces that tend to become overcrowded. With Airtame Cloud Plus, you can customize specific safety-related images, save them to Dropbox or Microsoft OneDrive and use them to inform students of their allocated time and place to eat, to wash their hands thoroughly before and after eating, and to avoid sharing food. A simple image or series of images on-screen can serve as a prompt reminder, and help prevent common areas from becoming crowded.

Keep students and teachers informed about room schedules

After many months of learning and teaching from home, both students and teachers may take some time to re-adjust to classes resuming on school premises. Sharing a clear overview of all major classrooms and shared learning spaces with [Room Overview](#) is a great way to remind people of where they need to be and which different rooms and facilities are being occupied at certain times. Many schools are transforming gymnasiums and libraries into extended classroom spaces to accommodate social distancing. Room Overview can also be used to communicate these temporary changes.



Keep parents and visitors updated with custom messaging

It's just as important for parents and visitors to the school to be aware of the safety measures in place while on school grounds. Ordinarily, parents are likely to congregate in common areas while they wait for students to finish school, such as reception areas and hallways. Digital signage can help nudge visitors to spread out across different locations in the school to prevent certain areas from congestion. Using the [Looped Content](#) feature, you can set up different apps to play on loop. For example, you could feature a combination of content on screen including a Google Slide reminding visitors to practice social distancing and sanitize their hands regularly, imagery saved to Microsoft Onedrive to showcase recent school events and a school promotional video via [YouTube](#).

Promote initiatives designed to support students and families

Common areas can be used to spread messages of support and share information about services available to students and families. For example, you can feature signage in reception areas and school corridors about mental health and counselling assistance available for students, or encourage students to check in with their friends and classmates regularly. Ensuring parents and visitors have access to this information can help spread awareness and ensure students feel supported within the school environment.

Staffrooms and IT offices

When teachers and staff aren't in lessons or supervising students, staff rooms and IT offices provide a space for them to meet, share information and plan lessons or other school initiatives.



Share important safety updates with school staff

Within most education environments, staff, including receptionists, administrators and teachers need to be aware of safety procedures and instructions so that they can encourage the correct behavior from students and visitors while on school grounds. Digital signage can be used to inform staff about the new standard procedures that need to be followed on campus, such as the number of students permitted within each space, the protocol for personal hygiene, and how to manage crowds of students gathering in common areas such as libraries or cafeterias. This way, staff are better equipped with the information they need to maintain student safety during school hours.

Digital signage can also be used within staffrooms to communicate messages that may not be relevant or appropriate for students. For example, tips on how to help students readjust to learning within new classroom setups, or the process to follow if a student is physically unwell or emotionally stressed.

Remote screen management for IT personnel

It's not just students and teachers who will need to abide by the new safety regulations in the post-lockdown world. IT personnel will also need to stay safe.

While using digital signage in schools and universities is effective in sharing information, the method of sharing information is also safe. With [Airtame Cloud Plus](#), IT administrators and communications departments can remotely update and manage screens, without physically touching noticeboards. Using [Scheduled Content](#) under the Looped Content feature, you can plan digital signage in advance according to specific hours and days of the week. This way, admins can set a schedule for the week and get the correct message out at the right time with very little maintenance.



Share information about support services

Much like students, many teachers are in need of additional support as they adjust to a new way of working. Use digital signage to remind teachers to take a proper lunch break where possible, and inform them of any healthcare services that are available.

Save power, money and time

With Airtame, you can schedule all [CEC-compatible](#) displays to power on and off with the Sleep Schedule tool in Airtame Cloud Plus. Using this feature, IT admins and teachers can save power and money, by having screens in classrooms, common areas and staff areas turn off at set times of the day, or when not in use for a set amount of time (instantly, after one minute, five minutes, etc.). This can also help to extend the life of projector lamps that are prone to burn out quickly.

How to get started

Do your research

Before locking yourself in with a digital signage platform, make sure you do your research. If you're interested in learning more about how Airtame can help with digital signage, you can check out our [website](#).

Some helpful Airtame resources

If you're an existing Airtame customer, or are considering adopting our solution, we're providing some complimentary assistance during COVID-19.

1. We've created a Health and Safety digital signage [template](#). To use it across your screens, simply 1) sign into your Airtame Cloud account 2) go to the Devices tab 3) tick the boxes next to your desired screen(s) 4) Click "Edit settings" 5) paste the template URL into the "Website" field and 6) click "Apply changes"
2. If you like the look of our Health and Safety [template](#), but want to add some information or tweak it to suit the safety practices of your school, you can download and customize it in your own Google Slides account. If there's any confidential information you want to share on your screens, we recommend using the [Google Slides app](#), available in Airtame Cloud.
3. Finally, we're offering free design resources for those of you who have custom digital signage requests. To get hold of our design team, please send your request to Covid19help@airtame.com (including 'COVID-19 design help' in the subject line), and we'll get back to you as soon as possible.

Other useful links

- WHO: [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) advice for the public](#)
- Airtame blog: [Use your screens to inform and encourage during the COVID-19 crisis](#)
- Airtame Cloud: [Take control of your screens](#)

Want to find out more about digital signage with Airtame?

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