

Ellington Public Schools Elementary Hybrid Model

Ellington School's hybrid model was developed in collaboration with administration, educators, Board of Education members, parents, and faculty. The model is designed to open our buildings with half the school present 4 days a week. A hybrid model allows for our schools to open with an overall reduced student population to monitor the health and safety of all, while learning new protocols to begin the year.

Ellington's approach to implementing the hybrid model is guided by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP), the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), the local North Central Department Health District (NCDHD) and other research based sources.

Currently, Connecticut's and Tolland County's new case rate is close to 1 new case per 100,000 population. The testing percent positivity rate is less than one percent. The Connecticut Department of Education, in partnership with the Connecticut Health Department, issued the following guidance for school systems to reopen:

Leading Indicator	LOW Favors more In-Person Learning	MODERATE Favors moving to Hybrid Learning	HIGH Favors moving to Remote Learning
Number of new cases of COVID-19 (7 day rolling average of new cases per 100,000 population per day)	< 10 new cases per 100,000 population	10 to < 25 new cases per 100,000 population	25+ new cases per 100,000 population

Currently, Tolland County falls in the Low Risk category. Thus, schools in this area can reopen to full capacity. The Ellington Board of Education unanimously endorsed the half-the-school hybrid model based on teacher survey feedback, parent feedback, administrator feedback as well as the above health data and guidance.

Weekly Board of Education workshops with the Ellington Public Schools' Reopening Advisory Committee will occur weekly throughout September to monitor and make adjustments. **The intent, as supported by health data, is for schools to return to five day full in-person learning starting the week of October 5th.**

In Ellington's hybrid plan there are two in-person groups, purple and gold, that divide the school. Each group will spend two consecutive days learning in-person and three consecutive days engaging in distance learning. There is a third group, silver, which consists of students who have chosen to participate in distance learning five days a week. Each group will be assigned a specific grade level teacher to deliver their instruction each week.

Half-the-School: Less Cohorts is Key

Ellington's hybrid applies the half-the-school model versus the half-the-class. The fundamental health advantage to this approach is a more effective isolation of cohorts from one another, or less mixing of cohorts due to space constraints.

For example, Windermere will have a maximum of 17 cohorts as opposed to 34 cohorts in the building at any one time and be able to take advantage of empty nearby classrooms and other large spaces to continue to socially distance (typically 3-6 feet, and at times over 10 feet).

Less cohorts in the school means less mixing of cohorts overall. This is a critical strategy to minimize the spread of the virus, as opposed to double the amount of smaller cohorts occupying every classroom in the school and inevitably mixing with other cohorts more often throughout the school. Essentially, less cohorts means increased flexible spacing and movement throughout the building to better implement virus mitigation strategies.

Health benefits with the half-the-school model include:

- Lesser number of cohorts on buses
- Increased opportunities for mask breaks
- Increased opportunities for outside lunch
- Increased flexibility for inside lunch outside of the classroom
- Increased opportunities for outdoor learning spaces
- Fewer cohorts passing in the hallways
- Targeted passive sanitation
- Increased flexibility of targeted use of space for a cohort(s)

For example, with less cohorts a school has the opportunity to assign specific bathrooms - in some cases stalls - to a specific cohort(s) to minimize cohort mixing. This concept may be applied to a variety of spaces throughout the school. With the half-the-class model, this would not be possible.

Educational advantages include:

- Students offered in-person special (art, physical education, etc.) each day in the school
- Increased opportunities for consistent instructional models and engagement
- Consistency from in-person to distance learning days each week
- Consistency in staff interactions to help meet social-emotional needs
- Consistency with instructional strategies and curricular pacing
- Easier transition to opening schools five days a week with full classes
- Access to the same support staff and peer groups each week

As cohorts move throughout the building, shared spaces such as bathrooms, cafeterias, and outdoor tents will be sanitized frequently. Cohorts will not travel in the hallways or use the same facilities at the same time. Students and staff will wear masks when moving throughout the building. Students will be provided a desk shield that will be sanitized regularly.

Please contact us with any questions or clarifications.

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