



ELLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS REOPENING PLAN 2020-2021

*"Just when I think I have learned the way to live,
life changes."
-Hugh Prather*

I. INTRODUCTION

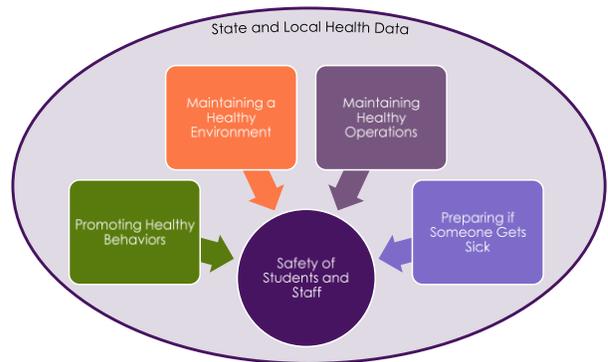
As we prepare for a return to school in the fall of 2020, the world looks a lot different than it did on March 13th, when we left for what we thought might be a two week break. Since then, we've changed the way we live: how we interact with each other, how we socialize, how we teach, how we do graduation, and how we see family and friends.

Moving forward with the required work ahead, we must remind ourselves that our students, their families, and our staff are now tasked with creating a second new *modus operandi* in less than half a year. It is a complicated endeavor. It puts stress on the entire ecosystem of our schools. However, it is something we all must do together.

Our approach outlined in this document is methodical, measured, flexible and open. We know, that for many, the possibility of returning to school is stressful and emotional. Our work will be grounded in the **Seeds of Civility**, to allow for our community to continue the conversation beyond the pages of this document.

The Ellington Public Schools' number one priority as we bring students and staff back to school campuses is safety. We will follow prescribed requirements of public health officials, and the state and federal Departments of Education.

We also must keep in mind the impact on the holistic health of our students and impact on their families of keeping kids at home. The Connecticut State Department of Education's plan *Adapt, Advance Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together*, states the goal is to provide settings **"allowing all students the opportunity to return to school full time starting in the fall"**. The goal of this document is to accomplish this as public health data allows. As of the publication of this document, Connecticut's trends and data allow for us to meet this goal safely.



We know that nothing is certain. As long as the virus is active, there will be risk. The strategies employed in this document mirror those within the State's plan drafted by their medical experts. On their own, they are not foolproof, but performing them in combination enhances their total effectiveness.

This document is a guide for the Ellington Public Schools as to when and how we bring students back to school campuses. It does not attempt to anticipate every situation in which staff and students will find themselves. Staff and students should follow these guides to the best of their ability, but remember the "Three Ws" for warding off COVID-19: Wear, Wash, and Watch.



II. REOPENING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

We would like to thank Reopening Advisory Committee for volunteering their time to assist the district in preparation of the “*Ellington Public Schools Reopening Plan 2020-2021*”. Their feedback in this process has been critical to district administration in the preparation of this plan.

Board of Education

Michael Purcaro, BOE Chair
Jen Dzen, BOE Vice-Chair
Liz Nord, BOE Treasurer

General Community

Sergeant Brian Santa, Ellington Resident State Troopers
Lori Spielman, First Selectman

Parents

Jon Moser, Parent
Andy Bhattacharyya, Parent

School Administration

Dr. Scott V. Nicol, Superintendent
John Guidry, EHS Principal
Michael Verderame, Center School Principal
Michele Murray, EMS Co-Principal, EAA President

Students

Ayushman Choudhury, BOE Student Representative
Annika Stimac, EHS Freshman Class President
Lana Piretti, EMS 7th Grader

Teachers

Mark Mahler, EHS Teacher, EEA President
Loretta Donovan, Windermere Teacher
Lori Purcaro, Crystal Lake Teacher
Becky Wentworth, Center Teacher
Kim Sztaba, EMS Teacher

School Nurse

Stephanie Sprague, District Head Nurse

III. CENTER FOR SCHOOL CHANGE WORKSHOPS

The district participated in a workshop with the Center for School Change Reopening Redesign Workshops to prepare for the task of reopening all aspects of the schools. The Core Team, along with a long list of additional members of the schools & community participated in a month long workshop to address the various needs of the district. Their input and discussions have been a significant help in the development of this document.

Core Team

Brian Hendrickson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations
Susan Nash-Ditzel, Crystal Lake School Principal
Jenna McDermott, Technology Integration Specialist
Victoria Schilling, Ellington Middle School Teacher (Science)

Additional Participants

Martha Allegue, Parent
Julie Jeffery, Parent
Dr. Michael Young, Board of Education
Diane C. Lasher-Penti, Director of Ellington Youth Services
Dr. Edward DePeau III, K-12 Math Specialist
Suzanne Markowski, Ellington High School Director of Guidance
Mark Mahler, Ellington High School Teacher (English) & Ellington Education Association President
Lynn Ouellet, Ellington High School Teacher (Social Studies)
Michele Murray, Ellington Middle School Co - Principal
Scott Raiola, Ellington Middle School Guidance Counselor
Jessica Marshall, Counselor (K-6)
Valerie Baigert, School Psychologist (K-6)
Alison Morris, Center School Reading Consultant
Ronni Rucki, Center School Teacher (K)
Carin Faraci, Crystal Lake School Psychologist
Diane Frasca, Windermere Elementary School Paraprofessional & CSEA/SEIU Local 2001 President
Holly Bronko, Windermere Elementary School Teacher (Grade 5)
Beth Palasek, Windermere Elementary School Teacher (Library/Media)
Kathryn Preuss, Windermere Elementary School Teacher
Daniel Spada, Technology Integration Specialist
Dr. Kristy LaPorte, Director of Special Education
Sara Spak, Special Education Supervisor
Rebecca Gonzalez, Director of Facilities
Lindsay Steller, Director of Food Services
Patrick Soucy, First Student Manager

IV. BOARD OF EDUCATION

Michael J. Purcaro, Chair
Jennifer Dzen, Vice-Chair
Kristen Picard-Wambolt, Secretary
Elizabeth Nord, Treasurer
Gary Blanchette
Marcia Kupferschmid
Jennifer Mullin
Kerry Socha
Miriam Underwood
Michael Young

V. DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

Scott Nicol, Superintendent of Schools
Brian Hendrickson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Kristy LaPorte, Director of Special Services
Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations
John Collins, Director of Technology
Melissa Haberern, Special Education Supervisor
Sara Spak, Special Education Supervisor
Rebecca Gonzalez, Director of Facilities
Lindsay Steller, Director of Food Service

VI. SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Ellington High School

John Guidry, Principal
Brandon HuBrins, Assistant Principal
Marc Richard, Assistant Principal

Ellington Middle School

Michele Murray, Co-Principal
Michael Nash, Co-Principal

Center School

Michael Verderame, Principal

Windermere School

Jennifer Hill, Principal
Jennifer James, Assistant Principal

Crystal Lake School

Susan Nash-Ditzel, Principal

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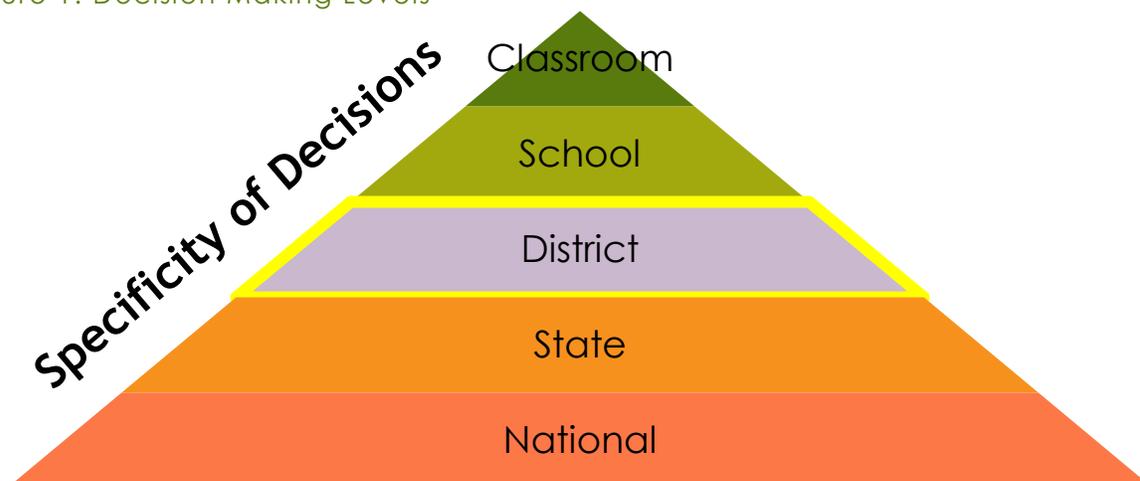
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1 Fall Reopening Model

The Ellington Public Schools, consistent with recommendations from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), plans to open school in the fall welcome all students back to school campuses. This decision is based on the current scientific and trend data in Ellington and Connecticut. These plans may need to be modified as we move forward should data change. The district is also using this time to plan for the need of distance learning during the 2020-2021 school year. Distance learning expectations, as communicated later in this document, shall take into account best practices learned in the spring of 2020 and move beyond to provide a more robust educational environment.

This district document is one step in the process of reopening schools. It draws on the foundational elements set by the State and National actors. It distills the information into how the district will approach reopening schools and puts several initiatives into motion in order to do so. However, this document cannot be set up to get to a granular level of decision making. School administrators and their staffs will need to take it to the next level of detail.

Figure 1. Decision Making Levels

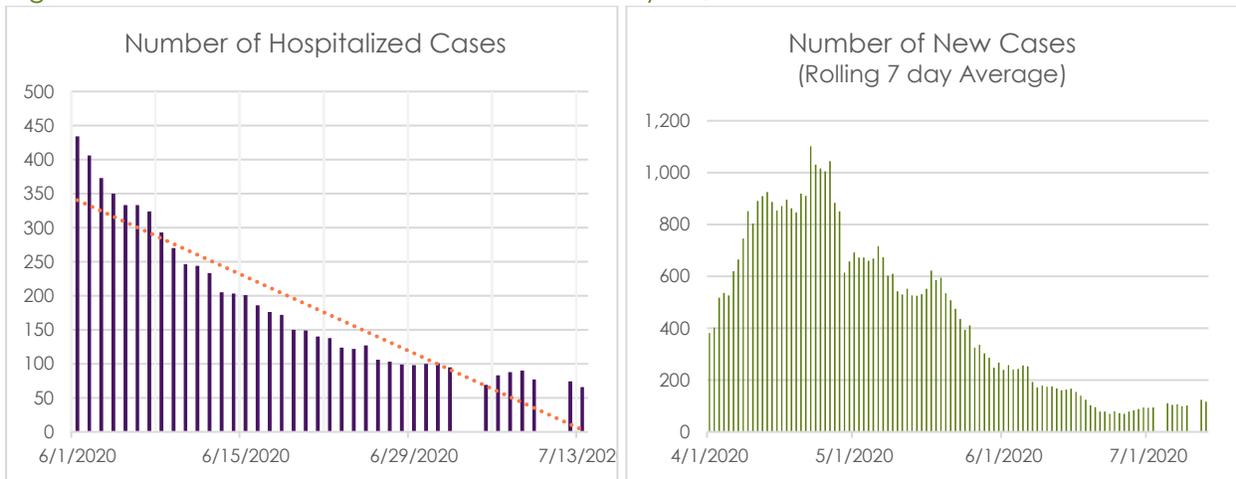


1.1 Monitoring Community Transmission

The priority of the Ellington Public Schools is to have students and staff return to school campuses for the 2020-2021 school year. However, the interests of health and safety may require short or extended closure of individual school campuses or individual curricular and/or extracurricular activities throughout the year based on the possible transmission of COVID-19 within our community.

EPS is preparing for the possibility of multiple openings and closings throughout the school year, as public health data demands. As of the publication of this document, Connecticut continues to see a decline in the number of hospitalized cases and the number of new cases per day remains low. Low community transmission lends towards all students and staff returning to campus.

Figure 2. Connecticut COVID Data as of July 15, 2020

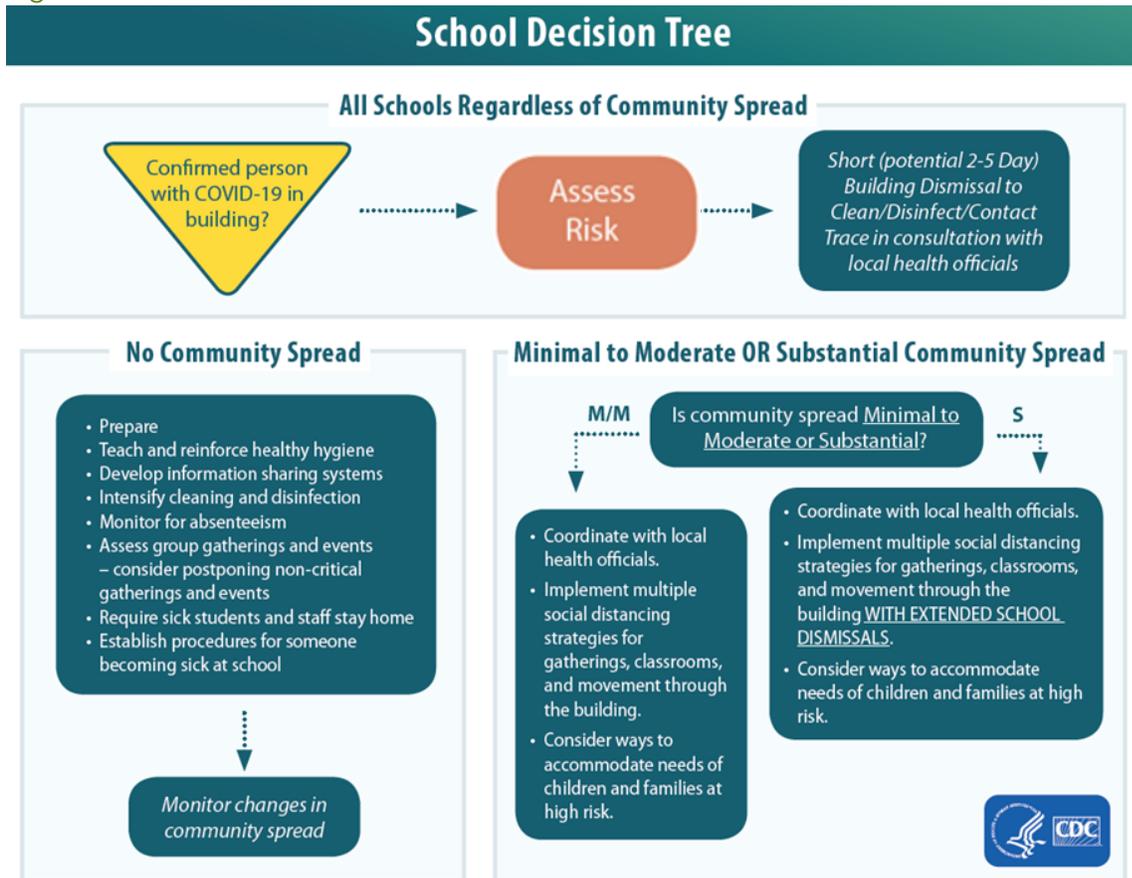


<https://data.ct.gov/stories/s/COVID-19-data/wa3g-fvc/>

Risk Assessment

Decisions will be made based on the best available information and in coordination with the North Central District Health Department (NCDHD), CSDE and Department of Public Health (DPH) and in accordance with state statutes, executive orders from the Governor, and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Figure 3. CDC School Decision Tree



<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools.html>

1.2 School Models

EPS will adopt three models of school operations to be chosen based on the amount of community transmission within a school, Ellington, and Connecticut at-large. Currently, two models are well-defined for **In-Person with Restrictions** and **Distance Learning**. A **Hybrid Model** is under consideration, however the logistical and educational challenges of such a model are significant and need further discussion.

As it stands of the publication of this document, State and Local data would be categorized as Low Community Transmission. If data hold, the district will bring back all students and staff **In-Person with Restrictions**.

Figure 4. EPS School Models

| Low or No Community Transmission In-Person with Restrictions | Moderate Community Transmission Hybrid Models Considered | High Community Transmission Distance Learning |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools Open • Buses at full capacity • Face Coverings • Identification/Isolation • Cohorting • Social Distance • Cleaning and Sanitization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternating Weeks • Alternating Groups: 2 Days in School, 3 Days Distance Learning • AM/PM • Distance Learning w/ Schools Open for Special Needs/Childcare | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools Closed • Remote learning • Blend of synchronous and asynchronous learning • Extracurriculars suspended |

Here are a few of the significant challenges to address with the various hybrid models under consideration:

- Supervision for students at home as parent/guardians return to “normal” work conditions,
- Social and emotional well-being of students with anxiety and/or depression,
- Childcare considerations/work accommodations for staff with children,
- Learning program for some students, including students with special and gifted and talented needs, while at home, while teachers/staff working with students at school,
- General operational and transportation logistics,
- Failure to substantially increase the staff and student holistic health considerations from an all in-person, five-day-a-week model

1.3 Communication of School Closure, Move to Distance Learning

Public health data necessary to make proper decisions in opening and closing schools remain highly fluid. If possible, the Ellington Public Schools will provide ample notice for families in case of school closure. However, in the interest of public health, school closure decisions may be need to be made on a quicker basis.

As with our snow day protocols, decisions will be communicated to families as follows:

- Reverse 911 Communication System
 - Phone Call
 - Text Message
 - Email
- Local Radio & Television

Depending on the situation, the administration may close the whole district, or individual schools, as required by the public health data.

1.4 Transition between Models, Preservation of School Calendar

If the district is operating In-Person and has to close one, multiple, or all schools, the district/school(s) shall follow the approved calendar, switching to the Distance Learning model for the length of time required.

Expectations for the Distance Learning model, as presented in this document, shall be met as schools close.

1.5 Family Choice

It remains the priority of the Ellington Public Schools to safely return all students to school campuses in the fall. However, we recognize some families may prefer a distance learning model for a variety of reasons. The district shall make provisions to provide a K-12 distance learning education option for these students.

Families will opt into a distance learning education for times consistent with the marking periods at the student's grade level (e.g. quarters 7-12, trimesters K-6). Such time allows the district to properly plan for the number of students who will be attending distance learning vs. in-person. More details on distance learning can be found in Section 5.

1.5.1 Pre-Kindergarten

For students who are attending pre-kindergarten with services designated under an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), students may opt into a distance learning model. The district shall not provide a distance learning option while schools are In-Person for pre-kindergarten students who do not receive services under an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and pay monthly preschool tuition. If the district must close one or all schools, all pre-Kindergarten will continue with distance learning for all registered students in the closed facility.

1.6 Approach to Reopening and Decision Making

The Ellington Public Schools recognizes that this is a difficult time for many within the Ellington Family. Everyone may be experiencing different emotions and stressors: fear, anxiety, exhaustion, financial hardship, and fatigue, to name a few. The push to come back to school can be a trigger for these emotions, and we recognize that families and staff may react with strong emotions.

We recognize this is part of the process, and will ground ourselves in the Seeds of Civility. We allow for these emotional reactions. We encourage uncomfortable conversations. Everyone's opinion is valued.

Our path forward will continue to be methodical, measured, and flexible. We commit to sharing our thinking with the community and listening to your feedback. The challenge we face is unparalleled. But in challenging times, it is the strength and resolve of Ellington Family that will carry us forward.

Figure 5. Ellington's Seeds of Civility

SEEDS OF CIVILITY

To Promote a Fair Exchange of Ideas

Civility is defined as caring for one's identity, needs and beliefs without degrading someone else's in the process (Institute for Civility in Government). The Town of Ellington, CT and the Ellington Public Schools recognize the value of civil discussion. Residents are encouraged to democratically participate in all community matters even when it may be uncomfortable. We live together and create together. To civilly compromise is to admirably evolve as a community.



We Promise To Promote a Fair Exchange of Ideas by Living the Following:

1 LISTEN, OBSERVE AND REFLECT

We will be careful and thoughtful seeking to understand first and then act with honor.

2 ASSUME GOOD INTENTIONS

We will engage with others, assuming their positions are for the greater good.

3 ALLOW FOR EMOTIONAL REACTIONS

We will recognize that conflict is challenging and can be emotional, and we will strive to respond with understanding.

4 SPEAK ONE'S TRUTH

We will communicate our truth as we know it and with respect even when others may react with anger.

5 FACE TO FACE

We will make every effort to engage others directly and not through social media which tends to make the conflict worse.

6 FIND SIMILARITIES, VALUE DIFFERENCES

We will recognize that similarities exist among all people, and we will respect our differences.

7 DEBATE THE ISSUE, RESPECT THE PERSON

We will recognize that we are all human beings trying to live a fulfilling life, and we will engage on issues and avoid personal criticism.

"So let us begin anew, remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof.

Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate.

Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems which divide us."

- JOHN F. KENNEDY



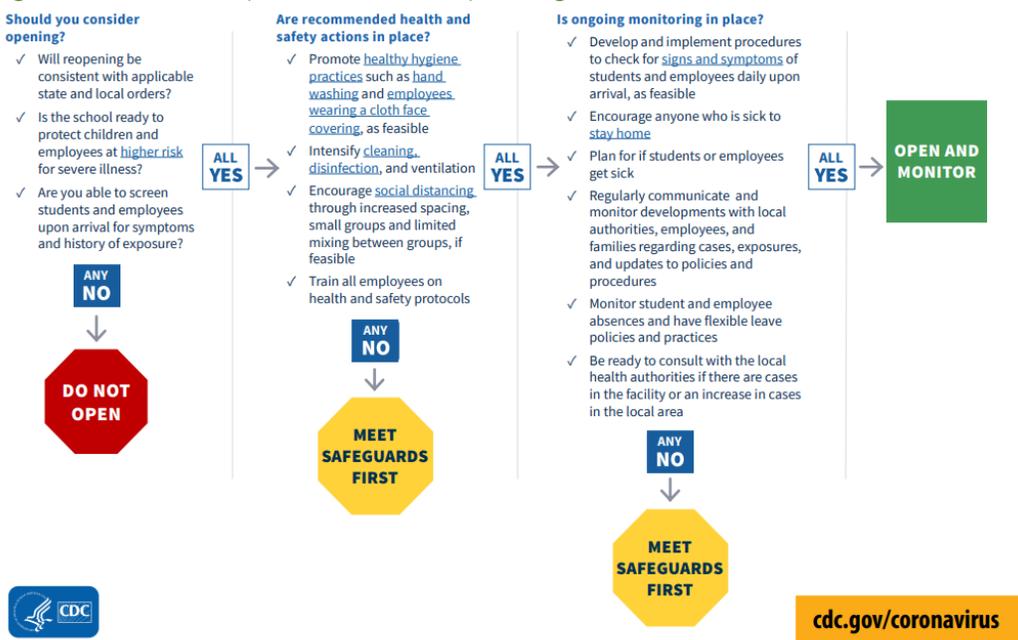
ENDORSED BY THE ELLINGTON BOARDS OF EDUCATION, FINANCE, AND SELECTMEN



2 Preparing to Return to School

The district shall put necessary safeguards in place to ensure schools can open in September. These safeguards include not only changing processes, but also preparing students and staff to meet these changes.

Figure 6. CDC Preparations for Opening



<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/Schools-Decision-Tree.pdf>

This district examined the daily activity that occurs within our schools with respect to the guidance issued by CSDE & CDC and what follows in this section is a detailed explanation of practices to be put in place when students return to school.

2.1 School-Based Reopening Committees

Each school shall designate a reopening committee to meet regularly during the month of August. The school based committees' primary focus shall be to review these guidelines in the context of their school environment, problem solve potential issues within the school, and elevate any potential concerns to administration.

Committees may include representation from teachers, administration, custodians, paraprofessionals, school nurses, food service managers, students and support staff. Meetings shall be informal, but should be within the physical school building. While meeting, staff should maintain a social distance of 6 feet and wear a mask, unless doing so presents a greater health risk.

2.2 School-Based Operations Plans

Each school shall, using the template found in **Appendix 7.1**, create a school based operations plan. Such operations plan shall translate the guidance of this document into each school's setting based on recommendations from the School-Based Reopening Committees. Each school operations plan will be added as a forward to the school handbook. It will be updated from time to time as the situation calls for.

2.3 District Calendar and Schedule

Based on guidance and decisions from the State Board of Education, reducing the number of required school days from 180 to 177, **the Ellington Public Schools will push the first day of school for students back to September 8th.**

The remainder of the calendar remains unchanged at this point in time.

2.4 Staff Training Plan

District staff shall be trained on health and safety protocols prior to the return to school. Such trainings shall be prepared online and/or in-person. Following the moving back of school, the added three days will be used for the purposes of staff training and classroom setup. The district and schools will dedicate portions of professional development days on the week of August 31st through September 4th to provide all staff with training on the district and school plans. Such plans shall be collaboratively developed with district and school administration, and Professional Development Evaluation (PDEC) committees.

New staff, including substitutes, shall be provided training materials within their on-boarding packets.

The district shall provide updates on a regular basis to ensure staff and students receive additional training. Such strategies may include emails, videos, and virtual staff meetings that discuss safety considerations.

2.5 School Liaisons

The School Nurse at each school shall be designated as the COVID-19 Health and Safety Compliance Liaison. The designated person will engage students, faculty, parents, and staff with questions about the health and safety requirements of this document and regarding COVID-19 concerns.

| Location | Name | Email | Phone |
|--------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| District | Stephanie Sprague | ssprague@ellingtonschoools.net | 860-896-2329 |
| Windermere | Andrea Maningas | amaningas@ellingtonschoools.net | 860-896-2329 |
| Center | Kelly Hany | khany@ellingtonschoools.net | 860-896-2315 |
| Crystal Lake | Lynn Seypura | lseypura@ellingtonschoools.net | 860-896-2322 |
| EMS | Danielle Aldrich | daldrich@ellingtonschoools.net | 860-896-2339 |
| EHS | Christy Ballasy | cballasy@ellingtonschoools.net | 860-896-2352 |

2.6 Communications Plan

The Board of Education, through its Communications Committee, shall target specific communications during the month of August, using a variety of mediums (text, video) and channels (email, social media). Communications may be targeted by school and age group.

Topics shall include, but not be limited to:

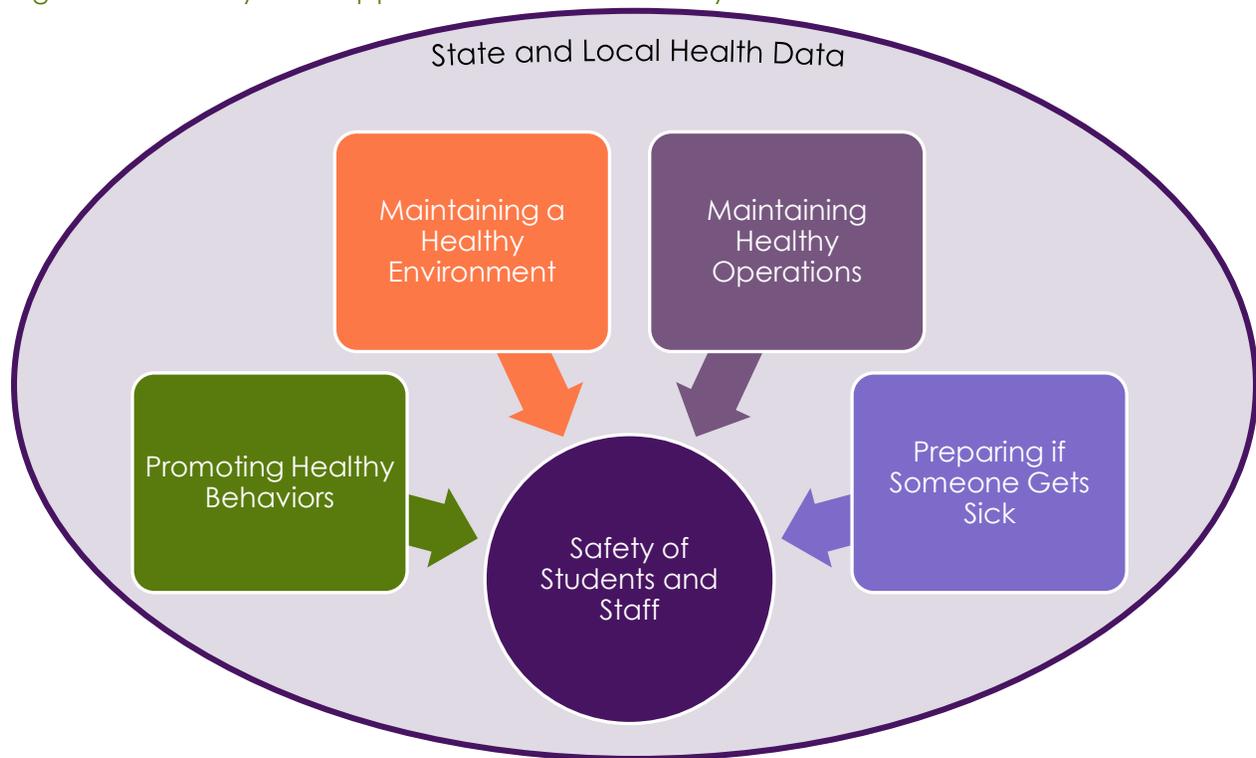
- When students should stay home and when they can return to school
- Mask requirements & proper techniques
- Bus Transportation
- School Breakfast & Lunch
- Handwashing
- School environment

3 School Operations

DPH and CSDE have developed strategies for reopening which take a multilayered approach in order to best ensure safety of students and staff. The details within this build upon that approach, and the strategies herein are meant to stack on top of each other to boost effectiveness.

As noted in Section 1, the context of this plan is that state and local health data show a strong reduction from the peak in April, which is the baseline measure to consider opening school campuses. This document is organized around four broad topics, **Promoting Health Behaviors**, **Maintaining a Healthy Environment**, **Maintaining Healthy Operations**, and **Preparing if Someone Gets Sick**, that once fully operationalized by the school based teams will create a safe place for staff and students.

Figure 7. Multilayered Approach to Ensure Safety of Students and Staff



3.1 Promoting Healthy Behaviors to Reduce Transmission

It is important that we all do our part to keep our schools safe for everyone. The items listed within Section 3.1. are designed with the Three Ws (Wear, Wash, Watch) in mind.

3.1.1 When should students and staff stay home?

Parents/Guardians and staff should be vigilant and look for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 within their families. We ask that everyone err on the side of caution in making the decision to come to school, and to follow the guidance within this document. Please **see Appendix 7.2** for daily screening requirements.

Figure 8. CDC Symptoms of COVID-19

| Symptoms of COVID-19 (CDC) | |
|---|------------------------------|
| - Fever or chills | - Headache |
| - Cough | - New loss of taste or smell |
| - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing | - Sore throat |
| - Fatigue | - Congestion or runny nose |
| - Muscle or body aches | - Nausea or vomiting |
| | - Diarrhea |

If students or staff come in contact with someone with COVID-19 or develop symptoms themselves, they should follow the guidance from medical professionals and the CDC for Quarantine or Isolation. Those who develop potential symptoms in school shall be directed for evaluation by the school's health staff, and follow protocols under Section 3.4.

Figure 9. CDC Definitions of Quarantine & Isolation

| COVID 19: Quarantine vs. Isolation | |
|--|---|
| QUARANTINE keeps someone who was in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 away from others. | ISOLATION keeps someone who is sick or tested positive for COVID-19 without symptoms away from others, even in their own home. |

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID-19-Quarantine-vs-Isolation.pdf>

Quarantine

Who needs to quarantine?

Anyone who has been in **close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19**. It also includes anyone who [travels internationally and returns home](#) or travels to and returns from a [state under a quarantine order/guidance from the State of Connecticut](#).

This includes people who previously had COVID-19 and people who have taken a serologic (antibody) test and have antibodies to the virus.

What counts as close contact?

- You were within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes
- You provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19
- You had direct physical contact with the person (touched, hugged, or kissed them)
- You shared eating or drinking utensils with a COVID-19 infected individual
- They sneezed, coughed, or somehow got respiratory droplets on you

Steps to take

- Stay home for 14 days after your last contact with a person who has COVID-19
- Watch for fever (100.4°F), cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19
- If possible, stay away others, especially people who are at [higher risk](#) for getting very sick from COVID-19

Isolation

If a student or staff member develops COVID-19 symptoms, as consulted/diagnosed from medical providers, they should not return to school until the following is met:

- 3 days with no fever AND
- Respiratory symptoms have improved AND

- 10 days since symptoms first appeared OR
- Clearance from a medical provider.

If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, but continues to have no symptoms as described above, students should return to school after 10 days since the test was passed, OR upon clearance from a medical provider. The district may require medical documentation in order to return to school.

If my child has to quarantine or isolate, how will the district continue to provide education?

In general, the district will continue to provide education to students who are quarantining or isolation, in conjunction with their teachers, as we have in the past for students out sick from school. Additional distance learning opportunities may be provided as we work to manage each individual case.

3.1.2 Face Coverings & Masks

The use of face coverings is one of the most effective tools in the reduction of disease transmission. Masks are especially important as people may spread COVID-19 without any symptoms.

Face masks do more to prevent you from spreading the disease to others than they do protecting you from someone who is contagious. This is why it is incredibly important to meet a critical mass of students and staff wearing a mask. It will take the collective will of everyone in order to protect our Ellington family.

We recognize that there are legitimate concerns about requiring students to wears masks for extended periods of time. As detailed in the following sections, the district will clearly communicate when masks are required and when they can be removed. We will also provide opportunity for “mask breaks” for students.

The district shall provide face coverings to any student or staff member that reports to school without one. EPS shall procure enough face coverings to meet this demand. However, the district also encourages all students and staff to bring their own cloth face covering. Masks should conform to applicable school policies regarding apparel.

Students refusing to wear a mask, in the absence of any medical documentation on file, may be dismissed from school and provided a distance learning program.

There are many different types of face coverings and other personal protective equipment (PPE). The figure on the following page describes the difference between types of PPE.

Proper Technique for Wearing a Mask

Wearing a mask is important, but it must be worn properly in order to have any practical impact.

- Wash your hands before putting on your face covering
- Put it over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin
- Try to fit it snugly against the sides of your face
- Make sure you can breathe easily



Figure 10. Types of Face Coverings

Cloth, Paper or Disposable Masks

- May or may not be "medical grade"
- Protects wearer protection against large droplets.
- Protects others in wearer's vicinity from wearer's respiratory emissions

N95 or KN95 Respirator

- Tight fitting, requiring a seal check each time the respirator is put on
- Reduces wearer's exposure to small particle aerosols and large droplets

Face Shield

- Clear plastic shield that covers forehead and extends below the chin
- Are not sufficient to remove mask, but may be worn in combination to enhance protection

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/pdfs/UnderstandDifferenceInfographic-508.pdf>
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/masks.pdf>

When do masks need to be worn?

Students and staff are required to wear the mask in most settings throughout the day. However, the district understands that it is difficult, especially for younger students, to wear masks for a prolonged period of time. The district will expect students to follow mask protocols, but will also provide training for teachers and students.

Figure 11. Mask Requirements by Setting

| Setting | Required | Required with Mask Breaks | Not Required w/ Other Strategies |
|------------------------------|----------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Bus | X | | |
| Hallways | X | | |
| Bathroom | X | | |
| Small Group Learning | X | | |
| Classroom during Instruction | | X | |
| Classroom during Lunch | | | X |
| Outdoor Instruction | | | X |
| Physical Education | | | X |
| Athletics | | | X |

Exceptions

Students must wear masks in order to attend school, however, there are several exceptions which will be accommodated by the district:

- Students who are unable to remove a cloth face covering without assistance
- Anyone who is experiencing trouble breathing
- Anyone who is unconscious or incapacitated
- Anyone with a documented medical reason making it unsafe to wear a face mask.

Mask Breaks

Mask breaks can be accomplished on a rotating basis. Recent studies and modeling suggest that between 70% and 80% of a population should be wearing masks in order to slow the spread

of the disease.¹ EPS shall endeavor to reasonably accommodate one quarter (25%) of students removing a mask in classroom settings at one time. While this may not be possible in every situation (e.g. lunch), it is a target percentage for teachers and staff to keep in mind. Students who are taking mask breaks should maintain maximum social distance from other students.

Figure 12. Guides for Mask Breaks



Teachers, especially at the elementary level, should work within their own classroom schedule to allow for mask breaks for students throughout the day. In grades 7-12, all students should wear masks and take mask breaks as needed in classroom settings.

Figure 13. Strategies for Schools and Teachers to Implement Mask Breaks

Mask Break Strategies

1. Schools or teachers may designate times during the day when students can remove masks in groups, following guidelines above.
2. Students can move to designated "mask break zones" within the classroom, which are socially distanced from others.
3. Outside physical education provides an opportunity for all students within a class to take a mask break, while maintaining social distance.

District Provision of Staff PPE

In cooperation with other local area districts, EPS has purchased enough reusable transparent masks for school based staff. A significant portion of communication is visual, and these masks make it easier for those who are hard of hearing to understand, while also providing a more welcoming environment for students.



Further, the district has also procured enough reusable face shields for staff to wear *in addition to* a mask. These items may be worn at staff discretion.

¹Universal Masking is Urgent in the COVID-19 Pandemic: SEIR and Agent Based Models, Empirical Validation, Policy Recommendations <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2004.13553.pdf>
 Calibrated Intervention and Containment of the COVID-19 Pandemic <https://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/2003/2003.07353.pdf>

3.1.3 Physical Barriers

The district is procuring enough desk shields to accommodate staff and students. These physical barriers are another layer of added protection for students and staff, but do not eliminate the need for other layers (e.g. masks, distancing).

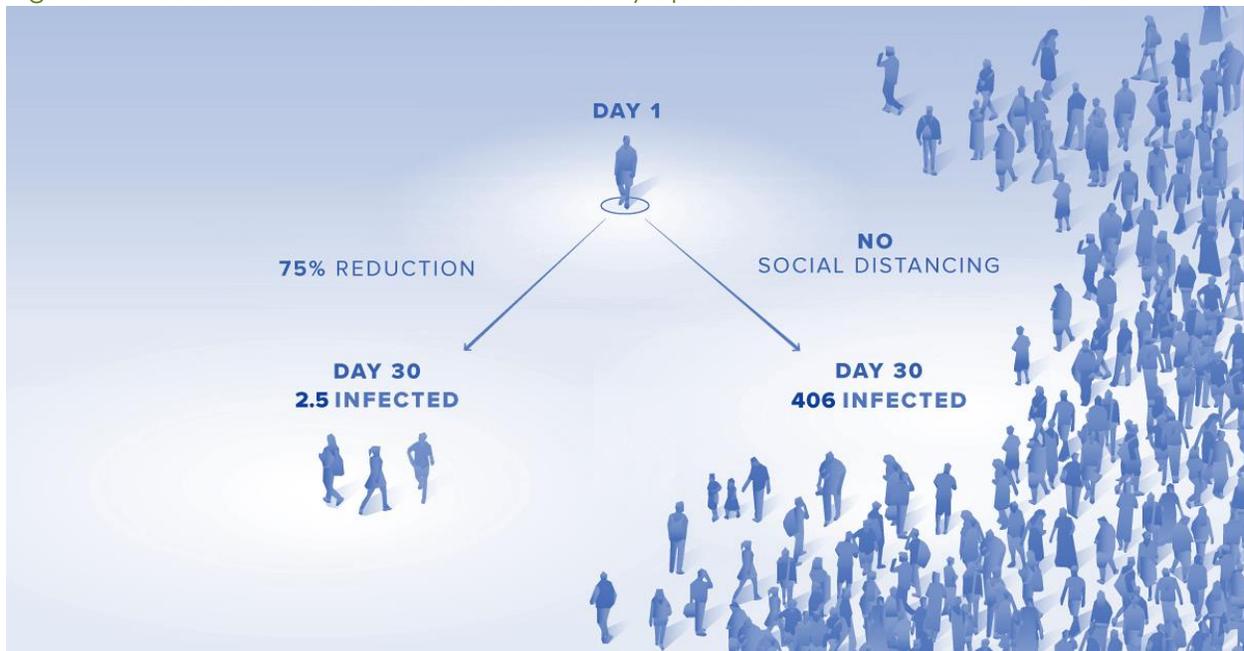


Barriers may be assigned to staff classrooms or to students, based on the practicality of keeping them clean during the school day.

3.1.4 Cohorts

Where possible, the district shall employ a cohort model within the schools to reduce the amount of interactions between students. Reducing the amount of interactions is important to reduce the potential spread of disease through the community. It also allows for easier contact tracing, in case of a potential exposure.

Figure 14. Social Distance Slows Community Spread



<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/SiteAssets/Pages/HumanCoV/SocialDistancing.pdf>

Elementary

For grades PK-6, schools shall use assigned classes as the base for cohorts. Cohorts should remain in their classroom setting and should not mix with other cohorts during the school day. When possible, “Specials” teachers—physical education, art, music, library/media—should rotate to each classroom, rather than having students travel to them. If weather allows, specials teachers should consider setting a static location outside, where students can be led.

Each school shall examine the practice of classroom rotation for core area subjects. If grade levels have core area teachers which require classroom rotation (e.g. Math, Science, English), the teacher should rotate classrooms, with students staying in place.

Lessons that require outdoor activity are encouraged. Normal school procedures for outdoor learning shall be followed.

Families with multiple students in the same grade shall be given consideration for placement in the same cohort, when possible.

Class lists will be distributed to families, so that they may use this information for scheduling activities outside of the school day.

Students shall not be assigned lockers. Students shall carry all belongings in a backpack or other bag.

Middle School

For grades 7-8, students will be assigned to cohorts for their school days. These cohorts will be assigned within each team, with students organized by their world language selection. If weather allows, specials teachers should consider setting a static location outside, where students can be led.

Cohorts should remain in their classroom setting and should not mix with other cohorts during the school day. When possible, "Specials" teachers—physical education, art, music, library/media—should rotate to each classroom, rather than having students travel to them. If weather allows, specials teachers should consider setting a static location outside, where students can be led.

Lessons that require outdoor activity are encouraged. Normal school procedures for outdoor learning shall be followed.

Families with multiple students in the same grade shall be given consideration for placement in the same cohort, when possible.

Class lists will be distributed to families, so that they may use this information for scheduling activities outside of the school day.

The school shall provide physical guides on the floors, sidewalks and walls, to ensure social distance is kept in the hallway. Where feasible, hallways will be one way. If not feasible, the hallway shall be split into two lanes for flow in either direction.

In order to avoid congregation within the hallways, students shall not be assigned lockers. Students shall carry all belongings in a backpack or other bag.

High School

Due to the schedule and number of classes at the high school, assigning cohorts will not be a feasible strategy to implement without significant disruption to student learning. Ellington High School shall focus on other strategies to limit the possible spread of COVID-19.

In lieu of this, block scheduling will be implemented in order to reduce the number of class changes and passing times for students.

The school shall provide physical guides on the floors, sidewalks and walls, to ensure social distance is kept in the hallway. Where feasible, hallways will be one way. If not feasible, the hallway shall be split into two lanes for flow in either direction. All students should be wearing masks during passing time in the hallways.

In order to avoid congregation within the hallways, students shall not be assigned lockers. Students shall carry all belongings in a backpack or other bag.

3.1.5 Teaching in the Classroom

Although students and teachers will be returning to the classroom, it will not be the same as when we left school in the spring. Teachers will need to modify their teaching in order to meet public health requirements.

Maximizing Social Distance

Each teacher shall make efforts to maximize social distance within their classroom. This includes modifying layouts (see Section 3.2.3), but will also require modifying lessons plans and teaching strategies.

While students are wearing masks, students do not need to maintain a full six feet of distance at all times. Teachers should limit practices that require significant movement through the classroom and close proximity to each other.

Figure 15. Modified Teaching Techniques

| Examples of Modified Teaching Techniques | |
|--|---|
| Previous Technique | New Strategy |
| Classroom meeting on carpet, students gathered together | Classroom meeting at desks |
| Small group discussion at table, students moving through class | Groups assigned by proximity, students spread out in classroom sections |
| Students working in groups on same materials at lab tables | Individual lab work on alternating days or outside, if lesson allows |

Manipulatives/Shared Materials

The sharing of classroom materials is discouraged. However, manipulatives and other educational materials are key parts of learning for students.

Classroom teachers should make appropriate modifications to lesson plans to reduce the use of shared materials when possible. If not possible, they should employ strategies to reduce the number of interactions and use disinfectant wipes to clean between each student use to the extent possible.

Figure 16. Reducing Shared Materials

| Possible strategies to reduce shared materials: |
|--|
| 1. Packaging materials individually by student and labeling. May be used multiple days by the same student. |
| 2. Alternating student use of materials by day to allow for sanitizing overnight. |
| 3. Targeted purchasing of additional materials within existing budgets. |
| 4. Assign classroom books to students for extended periods of time. Upon return, isolate books for seven days, then sanitize outside covers. |

Cleaning of Materials

Students may sanitize classroom materials using wipes provided. At the end of each day, teachers may place shared classroom materials into a bin for disinfecting. Custodians shall take extra steps to ensure these materials are sanitized.

Libraries

Libraries at all levels shall reduce the number of visitors to their spaces during the day. Where feasible, library carts should be used to bring books to classrooms to allow students to have access to these resources.

Lending of library books may still occur, however, students should not browse through books, touching multiple before selection. Possible extension of times for books to be returned.

Returned library books should be passively and following, may be actively sanitized. Passive sanitization shall occur by putting returned books in an area where they will not be touched for 7 days. Active sanitization includes wiping book covers with disinfectant wipes.

3.1.6 Chromebooks

The district is fortunate in its ability to provide all students in grades 1-12 with a Chromebook. With anticipated openings and closures throughout the fall, the district will modify its Chromebook policy. Students in grades 4-12 will be required to bring their Chromebook and charger to and from school on a daily basis.

Grades 1-3 shall have Chromebooks that stay in the cart within the classroom. Teachers shall hand out Chromebooks to avoid any crowding at the cart. Chromebooks should be wiped with a disinfectant cloth prior to be put back into the cart.

If school closes and Chromebooks cannot be sent home with students, the following morning, parents or guardians will be able to pick up Chromebooks at each school and at a designated location in Hartford.

3.1.7 Bathrooms

Reducing the usage of shared bathrooms is a strategy for preventing cohorts from mixing. Schools and teachers shall employ can use the following strategies:

1. Schedule designated bathroom times with other assigned classes to ensure cohorts do not mix.
2. Assign bathrooms based on hallway to ensure students do not have to travel long distances.
3. Limit the number of students in the bathroom at one time.
4. When possible, limit student trips to the bathroom during the school day.

3.1.8 Handwashing

At the beginning of the year, all students shall receive age appropriate instructional materials on the proper technique for hand washing. At the elementary level, teachers should make provisions for students to wash hands during the day.

The district has made provisions that each classroom shall have a hand sanitizer with at least 60% ethyl alcohol or 70% isopropyl alcohol and dispensers. If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer may be used by students. Teachers at the middle school and high school should encourage hand washing and/or use of hand sanitizer.

3.1.9 Services that require hands-on contact between staff and students

If a student legally requires services that require students and staff within 6-feet, extra precautions will need to be taken on both parts in order to accomplish such tasks. Providers of these services (e.g. occupational therapy, physical therapy, specialized feeding,

toileting/hygiene) shall wear gloves, masks and face shields while working in contact with students. Disposable gowns will also be provided, and may be worn at the provider's choice.

Figure 17. CDC Handwashing Recommendations

Follow Five Steps to Wash Your Hands the Right Way

Washing your hands is easy, and it's one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs. Clean hands can stop germs from spreading from one person to another and throughout an entire community—from your home and workplace to childcare facilities and hospitals.

Follow these five steps every time.

1. **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
4. **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
5. **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

Enhanced Mask Requirements for Children with Higher Risk of Severe Illness

For students receiving services as described above who, in consultation with health staff, are deemed high risk for severe illness, the district shall provide KN95 or N95 respirators, if wearing such mask is feasible. Providers may also be required to wear such respirators while providing service to these students.

3.2 Maintaining a Healthy Environment

3.2.1 Cleaning and Disinfection Protocols

The district shall continue its enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocols established this spring. These protocols focus on daily disinfection of high touched surfaces: door handles, sinks, light switches, desks. Such disinfection shall take place outside of the normal school day and shall be documented daily by staff (**See Appendix 7.3**). Additional disinfection may take place during the school day in high traffic areas (e.g. bathrooms), however it should be away from students.

As required, [guidance from the Department of Public Health](#) shall be followed.

The district shall also provide each classroom with disinfection wipes. Such wipes shall be deemed safe by rating agencies for staff to use without protection, but shall also meet EPA disinfection criteria. Teachers and students shall make disinfection of shared materials within their classroom setting a routine. Use of shared objects (e.g., gym or physical education equipment, art supplies, toys, games) should be limited when possible, or cleaned between uses.

3.2.2 Ventilation

The facilities department shall review all centrally controlled ventilation systems to increase the circulation of outdoor air, as much as possible, within the [guidelines released from CT Department of Public Health](#).

Teachers are encouraged, at their discretion, to open windows and doors to increase circulation of outdoor air. Such decisions should factor in the weather and in consultation with school nursing staff regarding safety or health risks of students and/or staff.

3.2.3 Modified Layouts

Teachers, with the assistance of school custodians, shall modify their classroom layouts to maximize social distancing between students in the classroom. As classroom layouts are often tied to teacher's preferences, they should have a voice converting their classroom to meet the goal of social distancing. Figure 18. notes the process by which classrooms layouts can be modified by teachers.

Teachers should strongly consider removing any personal furniture, especially those with soft materials that are not easily wiped.

Figure 18. Process for Modifying Classroom Layouts



Strategies & Guidelines to Obtain Social Distancing

When possible, students should be six feet apart, however, this is not a requirement. Some strategies for teachers to deploy in their own setting include:

- Turn desks to face in the same direction (rather than facing each other), or have students sit on only one side of tables, spaced apart.
- Move desks into rows and columns to maximize space between students.
- Maximize distance between teacher instructional areas and student desks.
- Physical barriers provided to staff (Section 3.1.3) should be deployed where appropriate.

3.2.4 Who is allowed within buildings during the school day?

In order to limit potential exposure, all non-essential visitors and volunteers shall not be allowed into the building during the school day.

If a parent comes to drop off something a student forgot, they should remain outside until the student comes to pick it up from them directly.

Meetings with parents, including PPTs, should continue to be held remotely.

Activities with external groups may happen using distance meeting technology (e.g. Google Meet, Zoom), but should not occur within the building.

3.2.5 Protocol for Entry into the School

Students with their parents, staff and essential visitors (collectively "entrants") shall perform a pre-screen in the morning, prior to arrival at school. Please see **Appendix 7.2** for screening requirements.

Each school shall set up multiple entry points for students to enter through. Students may be assigned to different entry points in order to ensure no single entry is backed up.

Entrants go through a visual checks screening. Verbal and temperature checks shall be conducted as a secondary measure, if a student presents with symptoms.

Visual Check

- A staff member shall observe the student for the following symptoms.
 - Flushed cheeks
 - Rapid or difficulty breathing
 - Fatigue
 - Extreme fussiness
 - Coughing or shortness of breath

If an entrant looks unwell, they should be sent to a designated area for further evaluation.

Temperature Check

- If an entrant presents with symptoms during a visual check or reports feeling ill, a designated staff member(s) shall perform a temperature check. Entrants exhibiting a fever of 100.4 degrees or greater shall be isolated for further evaluation.

If it is determined the symptoms are valid by a health professional, a parent/guardian should be called to pick up a student.

If staff members pre-screen with a fever or other symptoms, they should not report to work, and call in to the schools' main office to report their absence. If upon entering school, staff or visitors screen with symptoms, they should return home after consulting with school health staff.

3.3 Maintaining Healthy Operations

3.3.1 Parent Pick-Up & Drop-Off

EPS anticipates a significant up-tick in the number of parents/guardians dropping off and picking up from school. This will complicate logistics at each school, especially those that already had issues previously. It is important that all parents follow traffic patterns, posted signs, and instructions of staff and ensure safety of everyone. Each school shall communicate any changes to traffic patterns prior to the start of school.

Parents shall not be allowed inside the building to pick-up a student, during or at the end of the day. Schools shall make plans to check proper identification with parents outside of the building.

3.3.2 Bus Transportation

The district shall provide bus transportation for all eligible students in the fall. Parents shall be provided with the opportunity to opt out of transportation on a marking period basis.

Students shall be assigned to seats in order to maximize safety and reduce risk of transmission and all students shall be required to wear masks while on the bus. When weather permits, all bus windows should be opened to increase ventilation.

The bus transportation provider shall do its best to balance the number of students on a bus and may make adjustments to routes if possible.

According to state guidelines, morning buses shall be loaded from back to front in order limit the number of students passing each other. This shall take place during the morning route and students shall be assigned to seats accordingly. For afternoon routes, in order to maintain the same students sitting with each other, students shall return to the same assigned seat as in the morning.

Assigned seating shall take into account the following ranked criteria, to the extent possible.

1. Family
2. Cohorts
3. Bus Stop
4. Grade levels

Students must stay in assigned seats during the route. For the first two weeks of school, the district shall employ bus monitors to establish proper bus routines and behavior. They may be used on as needed basis following.

The bus transportation company shall provide drivers with extra masks to give to students if students are not wearing masks prior to boarding the bus. The bus driver may refer students to school administration for failure to wear a mask.

Students refusing to wear a mask upon bus entry or exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms observable to the bus driver should be asked to return home with parents/guardians, if possible. If this is not possible, they should be assigned to a designated seat(s) on the bus. Students who continually refuse to wear masks during transportation may be excluded from transportation services after a meeting between the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) and appropriate school administrators.

In working with a team of industry experts and health professionals, First Student will be disinfecting the buses on a monthly basis with a carefully selected disinfectant called Zoono-Z71. This disinfectant has been shown to provide protection for up to 30 days. Additional sanitizing may take place on an as-needed basis.

For the 2020-2021 school year, EPS shall suspend alternative destinations for special circumstances. Regular, weekly transportation to and from an alternate location shall be accommodated, if it is consistent from week to week.

3.3.3 School Breakfast & Lunch

Food Service staff will take additional safety precautions while preparing, packaging and delivering food, consistent with protocols from the NCDHD. Nursing staff will work with teachers and cohorts to ensure the safety of children with food allergies, in a way that respects privacy of students.

Ellington High School

Breakfast will be served in the cafeteria at the High School and students may proceed to the cafeteria prior to reporting to their classroom. Lunch will also be served in the cafeteria, but students shall be spread out in designated areas throughout the school, including in their classrooms, for food consumption. Students should not share food and utensils.

The cafeteria at the high school shall be set up to provide pre-packaged meals and a la carte items. Markings will be placed on the floor and on tables to ensure students maintain social distances.

Ellington Middle School

The cafeteria will be open for breakfast at the beginning of the day for students to grab breakfast prior to going to their classroom. Students should enter the school from the outside of the cafeteria. For lunch, students may submit an order form during homeroom. Food service staff will deliver individually plated meals to students' classroom setting using disposable items. Students should not share food and utensils.

Elementary

Food Service staff will bring breakfast to each classroom at the beginning of the day and students may eat in the classroom. For lunch, students will provide teachers with their choice of food on a daily basis, with food options assigned to a color. Teachers shall employ a color-coded chart so students can receive their ordered meal. Food service staff will deliver individually plated meals to students' setting using disposable items. Students should not share food and utensils.

3.3.4 Recess

At the elementary level, recess will be staggered if possible to reduce the number of cohorts outside at one point in time. Cohorts should be kept in separate areas to prevent mixing. Play materials should stay within a cohort, and should be sanitized at the end of each recess period, with all reasonable attempts being made to maintain social distancing between cohorts.

Due to the size and number of touchpoints needed to be disinfected between uses, the use of playground equipment shall be prohibited.

3.3.5 Water Fountains

In order to minimize the use of water fountains, the district shall continue to promote the usage of water bottles by students. Use of water fountains should be to fill individual cups or bottles. Sharing these individual items should be strongly discouraged.

3.3.6 Field Trips

Learning does not just take place in a classroom setting, but for now, field trips shall continue to be prohibited. The district promotes the use of outdoor learning on the school campus and virtual activities in order to provide learning opportunities.

3.3.7 Large Events

Student assemblies, special performances, and celebrations of school spirit should be limited to virtual activities. Pursue virtual group events, gatherings, or meetings, if possible, and promote social distancing of at least 6 feet between people if events are held. Limit group size to the extent possible.

3.3.8 Extra-curricular activities

The district is considering both in-person and virtual extra-curricular activities, depending on community transmission factors and outside guidance. If held virtually, each school must ensure equity by examining the time of day these opportunities are offered, as all students may not be able to participate immediately after school. The district shall make provisions, when possible, to provide opportunities for students to participate in enriching activities across schools.

3.3.9 Athletics

Participation in athletic events will be governed by the CIAC guidelines. Spectators shall not be allowed at indoor events (see visitors policy Section 3.2.4). During outdoor events, spectators shall be limited in accordance with applicable governor's orders at the time of gameplay, as

long as social distancing measures can be put in place. Spectators are expected to wear face coverings at all times, consistent with school guidelines.

3.3.10 Use of School Facilities

Outside groups may continue to use school facilities after hours, however, they must adhere to the policies within this document, including limits on the number of participants. Events will be reviewed by school administration to ensure compliance.

3.4 Preparing if Someone Gets Sick: Monitoring & Containment

The strength of this plan rests on our ability to keep students on school campuses, if and when, someone comes down with symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19 within our community.

3.4.1 Monitoring

It is incumbent upon all staff to monitor themselves and students for symptoms of COVID-19. Students or staff who exhibit symptoms shall be referred to the nurse's office for evaluation.

Figure 19. Symptoms of COVID-19 per CDC

| Symptoms of COVID-19 (CDC) | |
|---|------------------------------|
| - Fever or chills | - Headache |
| - Cough | - New loss of taste or smell |
| - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing | - Sore throat |
| - Fatigue | - Congestion or runny nose |
| - Muscle or body aches | - Nausea or vomiting |
| | - Diarrhea |

3.4.2 Attendance Monitoring

The district shall monitor student and staff attendance, and shall make provisions within Infinite Campus to track if the reason for staying home is consistent with COVID-19 symptoms.

When a student is absent from in-person education, parents/guardians should call or email the school with the reason for absence. If such absence is due to COVID-19 symptoms, the district will log this within Infinite Campus.

If the reason for an absence is unknown to the district, staff may contact parents/guardians to ask for this information. Providing this information helps the district, and its public health partners, to understand underlying trends and potential exposure of others to COVID-19.

3.4.3 Response Team

In addition to school health staff, each school shall designate one administrator to respond in cases where students exhibit symptoms consistent with COVID-19. Administrators may also designate additional staff members as needed (e.g. lead teachers, support staff, paraprofessionals) to assist with response.

3.4.4 Designated Isolation Room

Each school shall designate an isolation room for students who exhibit symptoms consistent with COVID-19. Such room shall be located near the nurse's office, if possible. The schools shall also designate a separate bathroom in or near this room for isolated students. A log of who enters the room will be posted on the door.

3.4.5 Protocol following entry into the isolation room

Isolate and Transport those who are sick

Students in the isolation room shall be required to wear a mask at all times, unless doing so presents an immediate danger to their health.

Students shall be monitored by staff while in the isolation room. If such symptoms are severe, school nurse staff, in consultation with parents/guardians, may require students to be transported to a medical setting via ambulance.

Any student who enters into the isolation room shall be dismissed for the day, with the recommendation to follow up with a medical provider and receive a COVID-19 Test. The district shall provide the family with the latest guidance from the CDC.

Students or staff may only return to school following guidance of section 3.1.1.

PPE Requirements for Staff entering Isolation Room

Staff entering the Isolation Room with students shall wear a single-use mask, face shield, gloves and a disposable gown. Upon leaving the isolation room, masks, gloves and disposable gowns shall be thrown in a designed receptacle. Face shields may be sanitized and reused.

Notify Health Officials & Central Office

If a student or staff member is present at school with or reports symptoms of COVID-19, the School Nurse will fill out the reporting form provided by the NCDHD and fax the form to the Health District. School administration, or designee, shall log the details of such event using a Google spreadsheet (similar to Emergency Drill Forms) and notify the Central Office via text.

If it is known that a person present within a school has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, the health department and central office must be notified immediately.

Clean and Disinfect

If a student or staff members is dismissed due to symptoms of COVID-19, provisions shall be made for custodial staff to disinfect the room(s) used during the school day. The room shall only be disinfected if students are not present. Classes will be moved to a different setting (e.g. extra room, cafeteria, gymnasium) based on availability.

Risk Assessment

If a student or staff member is isolated or quarantined, the district will initiate a risk assessment process with the NCDHD. Decisions regarding the next steps, possibly including self-quarantine of close contacts for 14 days, classroom or school closure, will be made in consultation with the NCDHD and based on recommendations from the DPH and CDC at that time.

4 In-Person Academics

4.1.1 Instructional Design

Due to the physical layout of classrooms changing, instructional strategies will also be required to change. Collaborative activities and group projects will become increasingly difficult to implement. Although social distancing in the classroom is an absolute safety priority, building the classroom space around this priority poses many challenges to our current academic programming that revolve around project based learning, hands-on collaboration, flexible seating arrangements, and physical movement throughout the classroom.



Changes to instructional practices will include increased teacher directed instruction and independent work to accommodate social distancing protocols within classrooms. Additionally, the use of technology may be increased in several classes to allow for virtual collaboration resulting in increased need for the district to monitor screen time use and consider paper and pencil based activities (that are consistent with safety expectations).

Due to the potential to switch to a hybrid or remote/distance learning environment, technology integration during in-person instruction will be especially important to allow for as smooth as possible if/when the district is required to shift into a distance/remote learning environment. Trainings on in class instructional strategies and technology integration will occur with all staff upon return.

CSDE has released the [CT Learning Hub](#), which is a source of curated tools and resources for families, students and educators for both in-person and distance learning education. The district has also developed a resource page for that parents can visit for additional resources: [EPS Online Resources](#).

4.1.2 Assessment & Grade Level Expectations

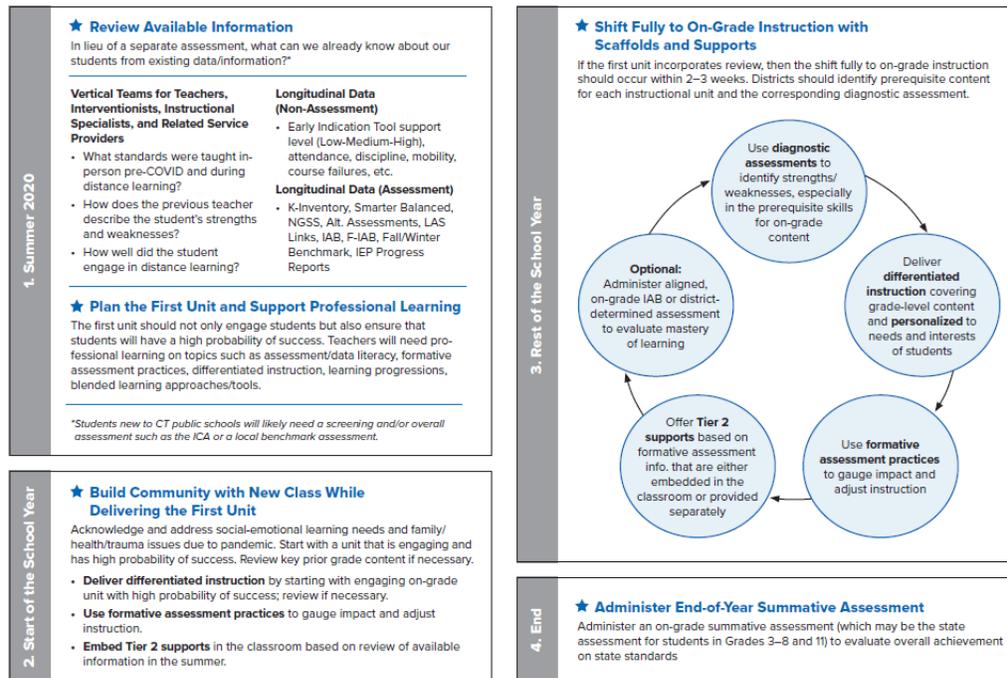
Extended school closure lead many academic researchers to study the best approach to instruction when schools reopen. Accelerating learning is being increasingly viewed as the most effective approach for instruction in the fall. Acceleration focuses on streamlining curriculum closely aligned to priority standards and promotes high levels of student engagement in both content and skills.

The acceleration approach is also aimed at avoiding a deficit mindset of instruction which revolves around over assessing students for gaps in learning and tracking those that have fallen behind resulting in a cycle of remediation. While it is important to avoid a deficit instructional approach, it will be critical to understand where students are upon return in relation to grade level standards. In order to assist districts in creating plans to both understand where students are and then shift into an acceleration mindset, the State Department of Education created a Sensible Assessment guide which provides a solid framework for how teachers, administrators, and district staff are preparing for reopening (see Figure 19 on the following page).

In practical terms, our first units of study at all levels will focus on developing strong classroom communities with an emphasis on relationship building as teachers work with students to identify

specific skills or content knowledge that need immediate attention. This “formative assessment” approach for all first units of study will lay the foundation for differentiated instructional strategies when all students shift to full grade level expectations in the second unit of study (approximately beginning of October).

Figure 20. Smart Assessment Practices - CSDE



<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Press-Room/Press-Releases/2020/Adapt-Advance-Achieve>

4.2 Social-Emotional Learning

As mentioned in the assessment section, the key during the beginning of school will be to build strong classroom and school communities in which students and staff are encouraged to process their feelings and use strategies to manage emotions. This is especially important because the return to school will pose many challenges for both students and staff.

The new physical setup of classrooms and cohorting are designed counterintuitively for many educators and students. These modifications but are necessary from a public health perspective to limit movement and create distance between students and staff who prior to school closure were frequently in close physical contact, learning shoulder to shoulder.

In addition to the physical space changes, routines will be altered and will result in significant anxiety and stress of our students and staff. To help support this transition, the district will be creating videos aimed at pre-teaching new routines and expectations that clearly show how school will look and feel different.

Additionally, the district will be working with our local partners and outside agencies to provide training to all staff at the beginning of the school year focused on managing and dealing with the stress involved in reopening schools.

4.3 Special Education, Intervention & EL Learners

4.3.1 Special Education

Students' special services are unique and vary in each grade level. Students with special needs are often assigned across multiple teachers in each grade level. Some students leave their assigned regular education classes to attend pull out supports, while other students may receive supports within the regular education setting.

For students whose IEP's require a significant portion of services to be delivered in a self-contained setting, transparent dividers will be in use in addition to PPE worn by teachers. There will be an added emphasis for students and staff on handwashing, cleaning of furniture, equipment, and materials within the self-contained setting.

For students whose IEP's require a majority of their time in a self-contained setting and require significant adult support, we will try to maintain a consistent paraprofessional with limited changes as much as possible. The cohorting model will not impact the time designated in a student's IEP to be in the least restrictive environment with non-disabled peers.

Students who require Counseling, Speech/Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and/or Physical Therapy

Counseling must occur in a secure environment and cannot occur in the general education setting. Transparent dividers must be set up between the student(s) and the service provider for both individual and small group sessions. In addition to transparent dividers, teachers will have access to PPE and cleaning supplies as described in Section 3.

Physical Therapy (PT) or Occupational Therapy (OT) occurs within a dedicated OT/PT room. Individualized programming should be set up with transparent separators and teachers should use PPE as described in Section 3.1.9. Disinfect shared equipment directly before and after students have attended a lesson.

Speech/Language Therapy is often in a self-contained setting with one to one or group. Individualized programming should be set up with transparent separators and teachers should be able to use masks and shields. Disinfect shared equipment directly before and after students have attended a lesson.

4.3.2 English Language Learners

Students may need to be grouped into one classroom per grade level if they require in class support. Students may possibly receive push-in services in the classroom, or be directed to a self-contained room for pull-out small group services. Self-contained programming should be set up consistent with other small group instruction, and PPE should be worn accordingly.

4.3.3 Reading and Math Interventions

Students receiving reading and/or math intervention will continue to receive push-in or pull out services that are consistent with social distancing and other safety protocols. Delivery of these services will vary school by school grade level due to the unique layout of each building. For students that require instruction to be delivered in a small group, transparent dividers will be used to promote social distancing and separate students whenever possible. Technology supports may also be used to supplement delivery of intervention services when needed.

4.4 Physical Education, Arts & Music

4.4.1 Physical Education

Physical education shall be conducted outside whenever possible. Masks do not need to be worn when outside and maintaining social distance of 6 feet. Any equipment should not be shared during class and should be disinfected with wipes prior to each class.

Physical education should focus on activities that can be performed on an individual basis.

PE classes should teach students simple games that provide social distance and can be played at recess time.

4.4.2 Arts & Music

Arts and Music are a vital part of a student's learning and schools shall make provisions to ensure these can be taught in a safe manner.

Instructional design and scheduling varies greatly by school and age group. This ongoing challenge will be problem-solved on a school by school basis due to the unique layout of each building.

Generally, teachers should employ strategies as listed in Section 3. in order to maintain safe use of shared materials for students. Music should give added consideration to lesson design, especially where students may be required to sing or use instruments that increase respiratory emissions.

Where cohorting model is in use, teachers may rotate to each classroom so that students do not have to move through the building. As these teachers see multiple cohorts per day, each school shall give consideration to modifying scheduling and prioritizing these classes for outdoor learning if possible.

Schools and teachers shall utilize resources from the [Connecticut Arts Administrators Association](#) and [National Association for Music Education's COVID-19 Instrument Cleaning Guidelines](#).

5 Distance Learning

5.1 With Schools in Session - No/Low Community Transmission

As noted in Section 1.5 Family Choice, families may opt-into distance learning while schools are in session. This decision may be made for medical or personal reasons. Such decisions shall follow the marking periods of the school in order to allow for continuity of student education and district planning.

5.1.1 Grades K-6

The district shall make provisions for students that select distance learning, however such learning shall not be tied to their assigned elementary school. Based on numbers, the district may pool staff resources across all elementary schools to balance class sizes.

Schedules will have a heavy synchronous component to it to ensure parity with students in the classroom setting.

5.1.2 Grades 7-12

Students in grades 7-12 shall be required to attend their regularly scheduled classes throughout the day using synchronous education tools (e.g. Google Meet, Zoom).

Attendance shall be marked by teachers within Infinite Campus.

Teachers shall provide lessons within Google Classroom, or comparable learning management tool. However, they will not be required to plan different lessons for students who are home.

5.2 With Schools Closed - High Community Transmission

If schools are required to close, they shall transition from in-person learning to distance learning model of education. As discussed in Section 1, such decisions are fluid and may be required for short or extended periods of time. It is incumbent upon all of the district's professionals to prepare for such situations.

5.2.1 Good Practices to Make Transitions Smoother

While the transition from one mode of learning to another may not be ideal, there are several strategies teachers can employ to make transitions easier.

- Post all lessons within learning management platforms.
- Be prepared with alternate "distance learning" lesson plans (similar to sub plans).
- Integrate online resources provided by the district into regular classroom learning.

5.2.2 Grades PK-6

Build Community

-with students...

- record morning messages for your students at least 3 times per week
- offer live sessions weekly with the goal of building community as a whole class or in small groups. Consider the focus of a weekly meeting to be:
 - typical morning meeting topics
 - community meetings
 - fun games and activities
 - a time for students to share

-with parents...

- reach out for positive connections as often as possible via Seesaw, email, or phone. Aim to have more positive interactions with each family than negative.

Engage

- host synchronous, live sessions for lesson topics that you know are tricky for students or that can be difficult to teach without live interaction
- when sharing video lessons, include yourself (or a colleague) in the video. Students remain more engaged when they hear/see their teacher vs. a video shared from online
- keep live and pre-recorded lessons short. If it must be longer, consider breaking up the lesson or using a tool like EdPuzzle to keep students engaged by interacting with the lesson content.

Offer a Look Ahead

- provide a weekly schedule on Friday/Mondays so students/parents know what to expect. Detailed lessons do not need to be included, but an overview can be helpful for families to plan to complete the work.
- use your slide deck or daily doc as a daily schedule; include information about specials work and other reminders there.

Offer Support

- create an office hours schedule so students and parents know when you'll be available for questions that are not time sensitive
- include a tech support section in your daily slide deck or doc. Include information about how to log-in to digital tools, what to do if you're having tech issues, etc.

Stay Connected (to colleagues)

- schedule a weekly collaboration time with your school grade level team. Use this time to divide up the work and lesson plan.
- schedule a bi-weekly district grade level collaborative time to discuss curriculum projects and share ideas
- communicate regularly with specials teachers, special education teachers, and interventionists to ensure that each student's work load is appropriate and navigating to assignments is consistent for the student

Take a Break

- support student wellness by offering flexibility. This may include flexible deadlines, formats for student work, or adjusting work load as needed.
- encourage movement breaks throughout daily lessons
- consider the amount of daily screen time required to complete the work you're assigning. Build in opportunities for non-digital work throughout each day.

Provide Consistency

All PreK-K teachers will create a daily schedule using a Google doc or Google slideshow with information for the day and links to assignments using other tools (Seesaw, G-Suite, FlipGrid, etc).

- PreK - Grade 2
 - post a daily schedule to students' Seesaw journal; students will access through the student login/Class app
 - communicate to parents through Seesaw messaging and/or email
- Grades 3-6

- post a daily schedule to Google Classroom
- communicate to parents through Seesaw messaging and/or email
- Specials (Music, Art, PE, Library)
- Special Education/Intervention

Workload Expectations by Grade Level

Provide Feedback

- utilize written and audio comments in Seesaw to leave feedback for students
- utilize G-Suite comment features to leave feedback for students

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Yx7IxeN7CUMxWefKzycJlPcAUQVApHzLrdUaU6xKbwU/edit?ts=5efb87b3>

5.2.3 Grades 7-12

Build Community

-with students...

- record morning messages for your students at least 3 times per week
- offer live sessions at least once a week with the goal of building community as a whole class or in small groups. Consider the focus of a weekly meeting to be:
 - Reviewing upcoming assignments and lesson expectations
 - Class discussions
 - community meetings
 - Student check-ins
- spend an increased amount of time synchronously in the beginning of the school year to build strong connections with students

-with parents...

- reach out to parents and students when the student has 3 outstanding assignments.

Engage

- post new assignments by 8am every day, and assign work that students will need to submit daily (unless there are projects that need more time). Make sure that deadlines and expectations are clearly provided.
- host synchronous, live sessions to review content shared with students asynchronously. Synchronous instruction should be 20 minutes per class per day
- synchronous learning may consist of live chats, video conferences, discussions, debates, etc.
- when sharing video lessons, include yourself (or a colleague) in the video. Students remain more engaged when they hear/see their teacher vs. a video shared from online
- differentiate for those students who are unable to participate in the scheduled synchronous learning event by providing an asynchronous alternative (which could include watching the recording of the synchronous event)
- post a minimum of 2 videos per week providing instruction.
- provide daily feedback to students
- post at least two discussion topics per week in Google Classroom with the expectation that students will respond to the teacher and peer responses.

Offer a Look Ahead

- provide a weekly schedule on Friday/Mondays so students/parents know what to expect. Detailed lessons do not need to be included, but an overview can be helpful for students and families to plan to complete the work.
- use Google Classroom to post daily a schedule.

Offer Support

- provide office hours for students at least two days a week, and communicate office hours to students at the beginning of each week.
- office hours will consist of one-on-one "live" meetings with students to provide support / feedback, etc.
- include a tech support section in Google Classroom or assignment instructions. Include information about how to log-in to digital tools, what to do if you're having tech issues, etc.

Stay Connected (to colleagues)

- schedule standing weekly collaboration time with department or school grade level team. Use this time to divide up the work and lesson plan.

Take a Break (Wellness Focus)

- support student wellness by offering flexibility. This may include flexible deadlines, formats for student work, or adjusting work load as needed.
- encourage movement breaks throughout daily lessons
- consider the amount of daily screen time required to complete the work you're assigning. Build in opportunities for non-digital work throughout each day.

Distance Learning PD and Curriculum Workshops

| On-Line Learning Tools: | Grade Level(s) | Names of ALL persons included in the proposal |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| NearPod for both DL and on-site instruction. Develop a bank of tutorials for students (and teachers too if necessary, and develop lessons for both DL and on site instruction. | 7, 8 | Karen Nigro |
| Tech tools that can be used both in distance learning and in the classroom - jamboard, google drawings, google forms. | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 | Tori Schilling |
| Online learning in science for lab activities, discussions, teaching resources, etc. | 9, 10, 11, 12 | Payal Kaur-Aggarwal, Susan Wambolt, Ann Johnson |

| | | |
|--|---------------------|--|
| Digital resources, on the web & software, for students in my ensembles (Chorale, Treble Chorus, Vocal Ensemble) and in Music Production, including planning how both I and my students would be able to use them. | 9, 10, 11, 12 | Richard Diamond |
| Physical science NGSS unit with online modifications if needed. | 9 | Susan Wambolt, Roy Gurnon, Steve Donahue and Ben Giorgi |
| Honors Anatomy & Physiology online learning tools to supplement for DL, such as virtual dissections, case studies and other "lab" activities. | 11, 12 | Susan Wambolt |
| History of Modern Warfare Distance Learning model. | 10, 11, 12 | Dylan Schroth |
| Create and share high-quality, secondary level online learning tools, on a user-friendly platform. | 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 | Lisa Polack, Gillian Zieger |
| Using Online learning tools for fall semester and to build a virtual district-wide student Art exhibition using FlipGrid. | 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 | Kath Lanz, Kelly Griffin |
| Research DL tools and develop/revise instruction and assessments for online learning platforms. | 9, 10, 11, 12 | Lori Greenberg and Kim LaDuke |
| Build meaningful units in the new master schedule for music class, band, and chorus for DL. | 7, 8 | Mary Walsh and Stephanie Neeson |
| For DL, and also to provide more flexibility for literacy and special education staff, a folder of virtual lessons will be created that follow the Wilson curriculum. Also explore a virtual testing format so that students' progress would be monitored. | 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 | Becky Derby, Melissa Wills, Tyler Brooks, Olivia Palozej |
| PD on how to use online learning tools, I would also like "live" training on using Zoom and WeVideo more effectively. | 9, 10, 11, 12 | Payal Kaur-Aggarwal |

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1iZnDIM58x2lbDLvcuaSt25DFDGCxiBlqYr-VW-_7Myo/edit?ts=5efb879a

6 Human Resources

6.1 Leave Policies & Excused Absences

6.1.1 When should a staff member stay home?

Staff members should follow quarantine and isolation guidance under Section 3.1.1., but must also follow protocols for use of sick time, such as providing a doctor's note, under collectively bargained contracts.

The district shall send employees home if they exhibit COVID-19 symptoms, as such symptoms pose a direct threat to other staff and students.

6.1.2 Use of Paid Sick Leave

The district shall follow collectively bargained agreements and state and federal law, including the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), regarding the provision and use of paid sick leave.

6.1.3 Accommodations for staff at higher risk for severe illness

If staff they feel they need a reasonable accommodation in order to return to work and perform the essential functions of their jobs, as those terms are defined by applicable state and federal law, due to COVID-19-related or other disability issues, it is incumbent upon the staff members to request such accommodations prior to the Board-selected date for teachers to return to work.

Any such request filed with the Central Office will initiate an interactive process between the Board's Administration and the requesting employee to try to find a suitable reasonable accommodation that does not pose an undue hardship on the school district. This process will likely involve the Administration asking questions of the requesting employee to determine whether the employee's condition is a disability for which accommodations are required by applicable law and a requirement for the requesting employee to provide medical documentation from the employee's physician as to what accommodations the doctor feels are necessary for the employee to perform his/her job assignment.

Note, however, that such accommodations are not generally required except for the employee's own disability. Accommodations are not required based on an employee's family member having a disability or for general fear of becoming ill. The issues from family members' disabilities or need for care may trigger some paid leave benefits under either the *Families First Coronavirus Act* or the *Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act*. Employees not eligible for accommodations may want to seek legal advice from counsel of their choice as to whether they might be eligible for such benefits and how to apply to the state or federal government for such aid.

If you determine that you want to apply for such benefits, please contact the Human Resources department for forms necessary for such applications.

7 Appendices

7.1 School Operations Plan (SAMPLE)

2 Preparing to Return to School

2.1 School-Based Reopening Committee

2.2 Staff Training Plan

2.3 School Liaisons

2.4 Communications Plan

3 School Operations

3.1 Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread

3.1.1 When should students and staff stay home?

3.1.2 Face Coverings

3.1.3 Physical Barriers

3.1.4 Cohorts

3.1.5 Teaching in the Classroom

3.1.6 Bathrooms

3.1.7 Handwashing

3.1.8 Services that require close proximity between staff and students

3.2 Maintaining a Healthy Environment

3.2.1 Cleaning and Disinfection Protocols

3.2.2 Ventilation

3.2.3 Modified Layouts

3.2.4 Entry into Building

3.3 Maintaining Healthy Operations

3.3.1 Parent Pick-Up & Drop-Off

3.3.2 Bus Transportation

3.3.3 School Breakfast & Lunch

3.3.4 Recess

3.3.5 Water Fountains

3.3.6 Field Trips

3.3.7 Large Events

3.3.8 Extra-curricular activities

3.3.9 Athletics

3.3.10 Use of School Facilities

3.4 Preparing if Someone Gets Sick: Monitoring & Containment

3.4.1 Monitoring

3.4.2 Attendance Monitoring

3.4.3 Response Team

3.4.4 Designated Isolation Room

3.4.5 Protocol following entry into the isolation room

7.2 Daily Screening (by Parents with Students, Staff & Visitors Self Screen)

Have you had close contact with someone with a lab-confirmed COVID-19 Case?

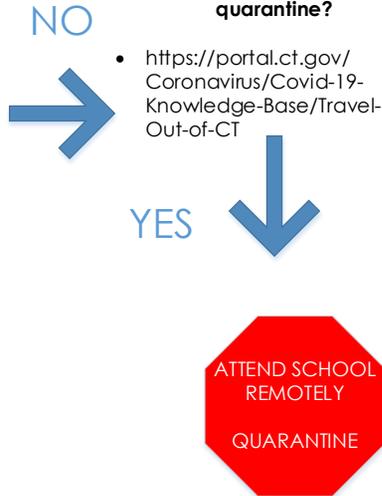
- You were within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes
- You provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19
- You had direct physical contact with the person (touched, hugged, or kissed them)
- You shared eating or drinking utensils
- They sneezed, coughed, or somehow got respiratory droplets on you



<https://www.mayoclinic.org/covid-19-self-assessment-tool>

Have you recently traveled internationally or to an area on the Connecticut list for self-quarantine?

- <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/Covid-19-Knowledge-Base/Travel-In-or-Out-of-CT>



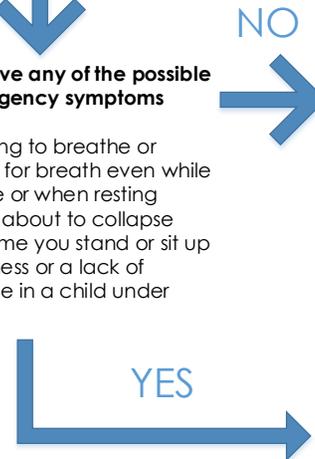
In the last 48 hours, have you had any of the following new symptoms?

- Fever
- Cough or sore throat
- Shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- Chills or repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle aches
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Loss of smell or taste, or a change in taste
- Headache



Do you have any of the possible emergency symptoms?

- Struggling to breathe or fighting for breath even while inactive or when resting
- Feeling about to collapse every time you stand or sit up (floppiness or a lack of response in a child under age 2)



Connecticut Self Quarantine Areas: <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/Covid-19-Knowledge-Base/Travel-In-or-Out-of-CT>

7.3 Daily Cleaning Documentation (SAMPLE)

| Room | Time | Initials | Disinfecting of the Follow Surfaces | | | | | | | |
|---------------|------|----------|-------------------------------------|--------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| | | | Desks | Chairs | Counters | Bathroom Surfaces | Computers | Hand Rail | Door Knob | Light Switches |
| 101 | | | X | X | X | N/A | X | N/A | X | X |
| Bathroom (AM) | | | N/A | N/A | N/A | X | N/A | X | X | X |
| Bathroom (PM) | | | N/A | N/A | N/A | X | N/A | X | X | X |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

7.4 NCDHD COVID-19 Suspected Individual Reporting Form



North Central District Health Department

COVID-19 Suspected Individual Reporting Form

Form must be faxed to 860-745-3188 Attn: Public Health Nurse

For confirmation of fax received, include an email address:

Today's Date: _____

School reporting case: _____

School address: _____

School nurse or COVID19 Health and Safety Compliance Liaison: _____

Name and date of birth of suspect COVID-19 individual: _____

Name of parent(s): _____

Address of individual including city, state and telephone number: _____

Date and time of onset of symptoms: _____

Symptoms: _____

How long was individual on site before transferring to isolation room: _____

Who did individual come into contact with: _____

Was everyone, including suspect case wearing a mask? If not, list here: _____

Other: _____

* SERVING: EAST WINDSOR * ELLINGTON * ENFIELD * STAFFORD * SUFFIELD * VERNON * WINDHAM * WINDSOR LOCKS