



25 June 2020

Dear Avon Public School Families and the Avon Community:

As you may have seen, Governor Lamont and Education Commissioner Cardona held a press conference this afternoon to announce Connecticut's intention to reopen all schools "for every student, every day," based on "positive health trends" related to COVID-19. In case you missed it, the slides presented at the press conference are provided at the bottom of this letter. We were advised that the State's full plan will be released to us on Monday, June 25. In the meantime, CT superintendents have been provided with the basic instructions and guidance, which includes the following:

- Districts will submit three versions of plans to the CSDE (Connecticut State Department of Education). One will detail our plans for a full reopening; one will describe the hybrid model we could use "if required" (i.e., if the State or our local health department determines community spread warrants reducing the numbers of people in schools); and the third will describe the model of remote learning used, again, "if required" (i.e., if we are told all schools must close due to changes in health trends).
- These are the basic guidelines for reopening:
 - maintain hygienic practices of handwashing and cleaning buildings and materials;
 - face coverings (nose and mouth) must be worn by all staff and students while inside, unless medically unable to OR during periods when it may interfere with instruction/activities, but six or more feet of social distancing is to be maintained (an example of this could be when a teacher is six feet or more away from students and is speaking to the class – as we have all learned by now, it can be difficult to hear individuals speaking through a mask);
 - "maximize" social distancing, meaning keep students as far apart as spaces allow (not necessarily six feet), since face coverings will also be worn;
 - cohort students in grades K-8, where possible, to reduce the number of students who interact (inside, not outside);
 - and allow students who do not return to learn remotely.

Clearly, this is a fluid situation. Therefore, we must be able to shift our thinking and our practices quickly if and when things change, just as we have been doing since March. That said, I am reaching out to you tonight well aware that the information I am providing is both basic and has the potential to change (we have seen how many times that has happened already); regardless, I would rather keep you informed. Please bear with us as we continue to navigate more specific requirements and recommendations once they are released to us. As I said previously, our administrative team has been working for months on how to close out this year and plan for next year (by planning for every possible scenario we might face -- full reopen, hybrid models, improving our remote learning model - in absence of state guidelines until now), and our Reopen Taskforce is already underway, too. We will continue these efforts and keep you apprised.

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In order to help our Reopen Taskforce continue planning, we have a very basic survey, <https://forms.gle/72F7kj95n4yTUM6o9>, we ask our families to complete. Given the new State guidance released today, we are seeking information about the potential number of students who will return to us in the Fall, and also potential numbers utilizing bus transportation. This information will assist us as we continue inventorying the space in each and every classroom to determine the capacity using social distance requirements for students and teachers, how many students we may have accessing instruction remotely, and the number of students on our busses. Note that we are not asking families to commit to the responses you give in this survey; again, we are simply seeking preliminary information to assist us in our analysis. We will seek additional information from families as we get closer to opening.

I know that this news will bring relief for some and anxiety for others. I have heard from many of you over the past few months, and there is certainly a wide continuum of opinions about whether and how we should reopen, which is to be expected. What I can tell you is that we will do our best to enact every safety measure we can to mitigate spread, based upon the public health guidance we receive; and, we will work with our families who are still concerned about sending their children back to provide remote learning. In these ways, I am hopeful that we can achieve balance with this decision, and I speak for all of us when I say that we have missed the students in school and look forward to welcoming everyone back.

As always, I am happy to speak to you if you have questions, ideas, or concerns. Please be in touch if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Bridget H. Carnemolla

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Connecticut State Department of Education

Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together



@CTDepartmentOfEducation



@EducateCT

We are in a health pandemic and education emergency

Health and safety, as well as access and equity must inform our efforts

Developing a plan required input

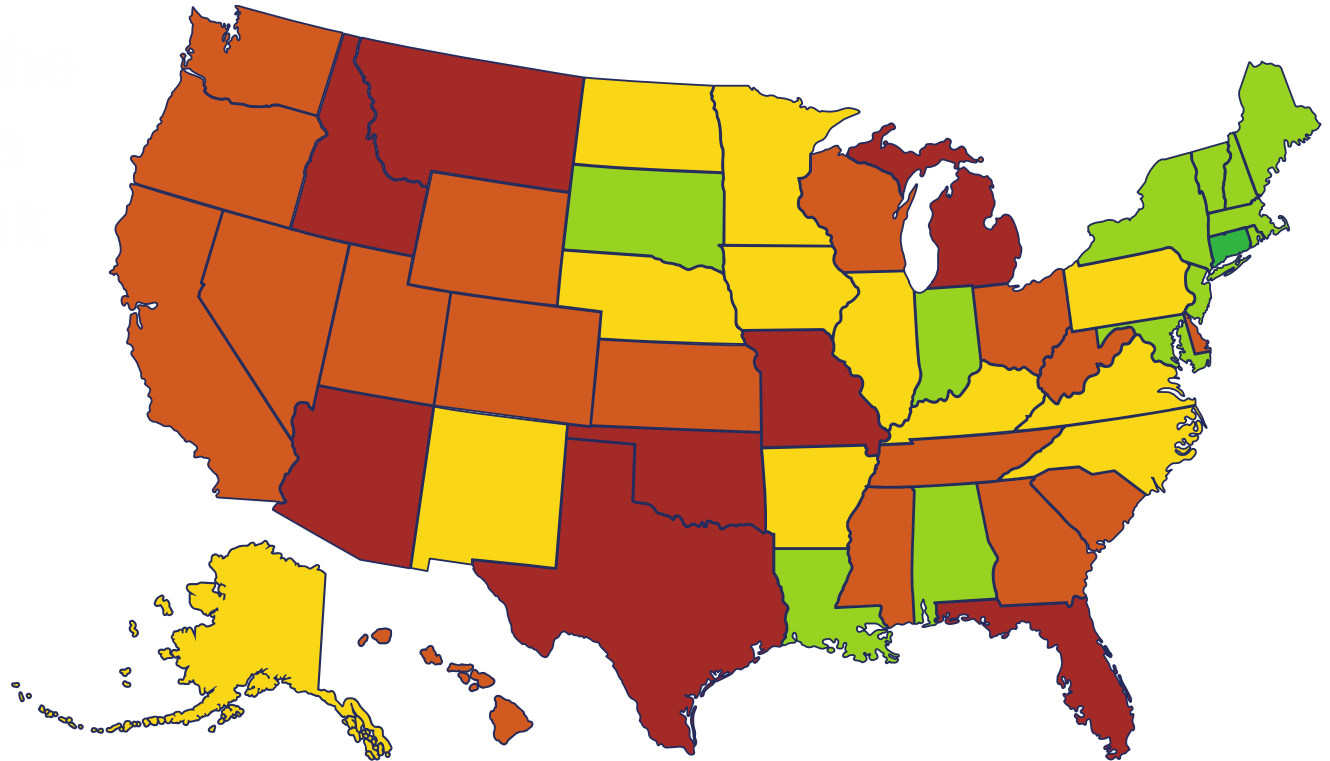
- Over 23,000 citizens
- Over 16,000 students
- ReOpen Task Force
- Regional Advisory Teams

What we consistently heard:

- Emotional well-being must be considered
- Schools are a structured, safe place in many cases
- Students missed school



Connecticut's Progress





Guiding Principles

- Safeguarding the health and safety of students and staff;
- Allowing all students the opportunity to return into school full time starting in the fall;
- Monitoring the school, students, and staff and, when necessary, potentially canceling classes in the future to appropriately contain COVID-19 spread;
- Emphasizing equity, access, to support the students and communities who are emerging from this historic disruption;
- Fostering strong two-way communication with partners; and
- Factoring the physical safety, social-emotional well-being, and the mental health needs of our students when they are not in school.



Operational Considerations

- Districts should plan for fall reopening with in-school return for all students, every day.
- Health and safety guidance protocols and infection mitigation strategies will be emphasized:



Maximize
Social Distancing



Frequent hand
washing/use of hand
sanitizer



Face coverings that
completely cover the
nose and mouth



Enhanced
cleaning/disinfection
of spaces/surfaces

- Plan subject to change based on developing health conditions



Classrooms and Buses

CLASSROOMS

- Cohorting
 - Strongly encouraged, Grades K–8
 - Encouraged where feasible, Grades 9–12
- Maximize social distancing
- Facial coverings – mandatory for staff and students during school day when inside the school building
- Frequent handwashing
- Enhanced cleaning

BUSES

- Facial coverings – mandatory for drivers and students
- Monitors encouraged for fall, particularly for younger grades
- Social distancing activated based on COVID community spread
 - **No Spread**
Full Capacity
 - **Minimal Spread**
Full Capacity, Heightened Health & Safety Protocols
 - **Moderate Spread**
Reduced Capacity and Social distancing



Ramping Up, Ramping Down

- CT data trends positively; we can plan optimistically for fall reopening
- Districts should prepare plans for full reopening
- Alternative plans should be prepared (hybrid model with fewer students and enhanced remote learning) in the event of future increases in community spread
- COVID-19 Community Spread will determine Ramp Down to promote health and safety regionally and throughout CT





Adapt, Advance, Achieve

- This is the first step to reopening
- Plans will change based on COVID spread (or developing health conditions)
- Flexibility will be the only constant
- Comprehensive Plan details will be publicly released Monday
- Updates & supplements will be informed with input from partners

**CT students deserve the
best opportunity for success!**