

# STONINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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June 19, 2020

Dear Parents and Families,

I want to thank all of you for the support you have given the staff and students since Friday, March 13th the last time our schools operated on an in-person instructional model. Collectively we have learned quite a bit about distance teaching and learning, the resilience of our students and staff, and the importance of community ties.

Last Friday a short survey was sent home to you to complete and 875 responses were compiled. Knowing your preferences for the next school year is extremely helpful as we move forward over the next several weeks as we prepare for August. The comments expressed the true range of families' needs and opinions about next steps. Of the responses gathered 59.7% preferred a return to the in-person model of instructions with appropriate safety measures in place, 27.5% preferred a blended model of in person and distance learning, and 12.8% preferred to maintain remote instruction in the fall. To review the survey questions and results visit our COVID-19 site to find the [DLP Family Survey Results](#).

Despite the uncertainty of the exact re-entry plan for the fall the District Distance Learning Committee has revised the [District Learning Plan](#) for next year based upon the feedback from families, teachers, students, and staff. Should any model of instruction next year include a remote learning feature the new plan outlines the expectations of families, teachers and students with a more structured model at each grade band. Principals are still working on their schedules for next year with the goal to have minimal differences between the remote learning daily schedule and the in-person daily schedule for students and staff. This will provide the structure the majority of families have asked for if we need to employ distance learning. I want to thank those teachers and curriculum specialists who worked to incorporate not only the stakeholder feedback into the updated plan, but the successful practices identified this spring as we immersed ourselves in a new way of teaching and learning.

Over the next few weeks the Leadership Team will assist me in finalizing a reentry plan and I will make a recommendation to the Board of Education for approval in July on what next fall will look like for our students, staff, and families. The survey results will be used to inform the recommendation alongside pending guidance, expected within the next two weeks, from the Governor's Office, Connecticut State Department of Education, and public health officials. The district is working closely with the Board of Education Chairperson, Alexa Garvey, State Senator Heather Somers, and Representative Kate Rotella to seek assistance from the state both financially and legislatively to make the in-person re-entry option more feasible without jeopardizing the health and safety of students and staff. We are extremely grateful to them for their accessibility to us and their fierce advocacy on behalf of our students, families and staff. Updates will be posted on our district website and we encourage you to check it regularly so that you may plan accordingly. Any major decisions will also be sent to you by email and or School Messenger.

Students will be keeping their devices over the summer. The Technology Department will send out information specifically to families of students currently in grades 6-7 for “swap out dates” to exchange their current devices for new ones and to families of students currently enrolled in grade 8 to drop off their devices at Stonington High School. Any questions related to hardware issues may be directed to Heather Lebovitz via email at [heather.lebovitz@stoningtonschools.org](mailto:heather.lebovitz@stoningtonschools.org) or by phone at (860) 572-0506 ext. 2154.

Virtual Drop-In Socials will run on Wednesdays, from July 8th-August 12th, for our current students in K-12 via Google Meet. All sessions will run 8:30-9:30AM. Facilitated by our mental health and guidance teams, these sessions will provide students opportunities to reconnect socially to classmates, stay in touch with school staff, support issues related to transitioning to the next building or grade, as well as address student concerns related to COVID, distance learning and returning to school. Students are welcome to attend one or all of the sessions, and students in grades 5 and 8 may continue to participate with elementary and middle school groups. SHS students will receive an email inviting them to each session. SMS students may access Meet links as part of the SMS Summer Drop In Program Series posted in Google Classrooms and on Parent Square. Elementary families will receive Meet links via email from the building Principal.

Many questions have been circulating about the District’s action steps to address diversity and equity issues within our programming and our professional learning opportunities. The Curriculum Team has started to compile a chart of existing programs, recently Board approved curricula and curricula under construction that documents the work already underway to develop a diverse cultural perspective in our students. A crosswalk will be developed and posted on the curriculum webpage to demonstrate how professional learning in Stonington Public Schools connects with developing a diverse cultural perspective and addresses issues of racial inequities.

The Leadership Team and the Curriculum Team will be addressing the specific issues of racial inequalities and injustice at their June professional development meetings. An outside consultant trained in facilitating conversations about race will work with the curriculum staff over the course of the summer to plan for next steps program and professional learning opportunities for next year.

As this most unusual and challenging school year closes I want to express my gratitude to all the students, staff members, and families who continue to make this school district a very special place to teach and learn. To our graduating Class of 2020, congratulations on your achievements! Take with you all of the lessons these strange times afford you. Stay kind, be resilient and make the world a better place as there is much work to be done. Best of luck to all of you!

Have a restful and safe summer!



Dr. Van Riley  
Superintendent