



FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION

June 24, 2020

Commissioner Miguel Cardona
CT State Board of Education Members
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Dear Commissioner Cardona and CT State Board of Education Members,

We, the Fairfield Board of Education, want to share our experience with the summer school mandates in an effort to better inform your understanding of their impact as you prepare to issue reopening guidelines for the fall. The summer school guidelines presented the appearance of choice to districts to have in-person education or not, but in implementation, they made it actually impossible.

The transportation guidelines are not implementable both financially (prohibitively expensive) but also logistically (we don't have the buses). For 2020-2021 the state guidelines that are currently in place for summer school would entail the addition of 177 buses and \$20 million in additional funding.

Similarly, we were not able to offer more students in need the in-person Extended School Year learning opportunities because we did not have enough staff to maintain 1:10 ratios in every classroom.

In a school it is nearly impossible to guarantee that no two students touch any of the same materials in the course of the day. A more realistic expectation would be to disinfect materials immediately after students handle them, but effective disinfectants might not be appropriate to use on materials (e.g. a class stapler, etc.) which could immediately be used by another student.

Most importantly, in order to comply with several of the guidelines, the district would require additional funding, particularly to implement the below guidelines:

- Additional custodial staff to meet disinfecting requirements
- Additional nursing staff to perform daily health screenings for all students and staff
- Necessary PPE (if it is even available)
- Funding for bus monitors and additional buses should there not be a sufficient number of families who opt out of district-provided transportation

The ReOpen Guidelines for Summer School referenced an intent “to ensure safety for all involved.” That phrasing establishes an impossible goal at the outset, as no measure any district can take will ever “ensure” safety. The ReOpen Guidelines also made many of the above directives into mandates, where the CDC Guidelines frequently included the phrases “when feasible” and “when possible.” Such flexibility would make a considerable difference as we worked with local health officials to implement recommendations for districts.

Finally, we would also caution you about mandating the eating of lunch in individual classrooms, when that involves lunches made at home, as that runs directly counter to the safety concerns involving students with life threatening food allergies. Essential to these students is having “an environment where they feel secure and can interact with caring people they trust” https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/foodallergies/pdf/13_243135_A_Food_Allergy_Web_508.pdf -- an environment jeopardized when allergens surround a student in his/her own classroom.

Certainly, the Fairfield School District is not unique in facing these challenges. Working to implement these summer school guidelines provided us with a preliminary opportunity to share our experience in the hopes that it informs the guidelines you generate for school reopening this fall.

Respectfully,

Christine Vitale
Chair, Fairfield Board of Education

Nick Aysseh
Vice Chair, Ffld BoE

Jessica Gerber
Secretary, Ffld BoE

Jennifer Jacobsen
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c: Ned Lamont, Governor

Deidre Gifford, Acting Commissioner of the State Department of Public Health

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