

**School Reopening Task Force Minutes**  
Stonington Public Schools District Office - Board Room

Committee Members Present: Dr. Van Riley, Superintendent; Mary Anne, Assistant Superintendent; Heidi Simmons, Board of Education; Danielle Chesebrough, Board of Selectmen; Glenn Frishman, Board of Finance; Nicole Torres, Parent; Gordon Lord, Parent; Michael Freeman, Teacher/SEA President; Alexander Tobiasson, Student; Lily Haghpassand, Student; Beth Stewart, Executive Director COMO; Peter Anderson, Director of Facilities and Operations; Gary Shettle, Director of Finance; Allison Van Etten, Director of Special Services; Chris Williston, Director of Technology; Ana de Oliveira, Administrative Assistant; Janice Lamb, SHS Career Center; Gloria Murray-DeBiasi, Head Nurse.

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Dr. Riley opened the meeting by thanking the committee for their participation. He noted the committee will be spending the next weeks or longer in putting together some ideas and recommendations that will be forwarded to the Board of Education. The Board will be making the final decision for opening the schools. Dr. Riley thanked staff and administration for assisting in putting the committee meeting together. Each member on the committee was given a packet of informational documents including the Connecticut LEA template that will be used for the report and plan that will be sent to the state and is due by July 24<sup>th</sup>.

### **Charge of the Task Force/Process Overview/Timeline**

Dr. Riley asked that each committee member introduce themselves, their position, and where each member is with the reopening plan. He explained the Board of Education will be meeting sometime before July 24<sup>th</sup> to adopt a plan to send forth to the State of Connecticut. The timeline was reviewed. Another task force meeting is scheduled for next Wednesday, July 15<sup>th</sup>. He explained whatever is adopted before July 24<sup>th</sup> will probably change, the document will need to be flexible.

### **Knowns and Unknowns**

Dr. Riley explained that surveys were sent a few weeks ago to get an idea of where everyone is with coming back. He noted there will be another survey sent out by Friday of this week one to staff and one to parents. Another survey will be sent out in mid-August once a plan is set to see where parents are with coming back, which will then be a second indicator for the district. He communicated there has been conversation about changing the school calendar. Dr. Riley recommended that we do not change it just yet.

### **Options for Grade Band Levels and Special Education**

Dr. Riley reported he has been looking at options for each grade level, has met with other superintendents, and State Representative Kate Rottella on the reopening issue. The principals from each grade level, Director of Special Services and Mary Anne Butler, Assistant Superintendent presented a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted challenges, issues and options for the reopening of school by grade level (PowerPoint presentation attached). Each member received a hard copy of the presentation. Dr. Riley asked that each member share their questions and concerns

about the presentation with the committee at the end of the meeting. He shared the email address where concerns and questions can be sent; [reopeningtaskforce@stoningtonschools.org](mailto:reopeningtaskforce@stoningtonschools.org). He will answer the questions and send both question and answers to the members of the task force committee.

Mrs. Butler explained the intent was to provide the committee with a crosswalk but with the CDC guidelines changing next week we will wait to send the document out next week. She communicated what plans can be put in place that will be least disruptive, knowing we will probably be in and out. She added we want to do what is best for our students and staff. She reviewed the state document which lists items that are a requirement and those that are not required. She spoke on various parameters that must be considered. Mrs. Butler reviewed mitigation strategies such as, preventive measures for adults, holding small meetings in person and larger ones remotely, limiting guest speakers and outside visitors. She communicated that principals had two options to offer at this time. We will encourage parents to drive students to school, while still maintaining social distance. Masks are required at bus stops, there will be assigned seats and siblings will seat next to each other. Each student will have the same bus stop and route in order to eliminate contamination, hand sanitizer will be available. She explained the district will be looking at students and staff that are compromised who will need remote access. Surveys will be going out to staff to see their preference of either virtual or in person.

The principals reviewed classroom sizes, schedules, traffic patterns and lunch waves. They shared plans using the 3ft distance rule and 6ft distance rule. They spoke of challenges and needs with each plan.

### **State Plan Highlights**

Allison Van Etten, Director of Special Services shared key information on federal guidelines for special ed, such as maintaining a least restrictive environment and that students are to have time with their non-special ed peers. She explained students with special needs will be coming in and out of the COHORTS and at times the special ed staff will also be coming in and out of classrooms. The district is looking at additional alternatives to be put in place in the speech pathologist setting. We have two integrated preschools and there will be clear guidelines for the three and four year old students and mask usage. There will also be a distance learning option. A committee has been formed with the mental health team to meet needs of staff and families which are providing support this summer.

Mrs. Butler spoke we plan to do the same models for each level. We will try to match teachers that are working remotely with students that are also working remotely. Students might have mixed students from both elementary schools and teachers for the distance model. She explained that the district is limited by the endorsements that the teachers have, because they cannot teach outside their teaching area.

**Upcoming Communications**

Dr. Riley noted our goal is to open in a safe situation for students and staff. He communicated we will have cost information for reopening at the next week's meeting.

The committee shared their questions and concerns, such as:

- strategies to work with the Board of Finance and the state for funding
- staff to cover lunch waves
- staff availability for the reopening
- relocation of preschool to other buildings
- building ventilation and air conditioning
- electives and class offerings
- traffic flow with staggered start and end times
- use of rented trailers for additional space
- addition of tents for more outdoor classrooms
- option to opt in or opt out in a quarterly basis for parents
- communication of next steps with community
- use of outside tents for lunch with tables
- use of masks and social distancing with younger students
- importance in elementary level of socializing, and how do you substitute for this type of learning especially if they need to maintain 3ft. distance
- who will provide masks for students and staff

The committee had discussion surrounding each members concerns and questions.

**Next Steps for Task Force**

Dr. Riley explained that an actual cost will be added to each plan after feedback is received from the committee.

Next meeting: July 15, 2020 at 3 p.m.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

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# Re-entry Options for SPS

July 8, 2020

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## Parameters that must be considered

- Creating a safe learning environment for all:
  - Social Distancing
    - Classroom makeup
      - CDC (6 ft) or American Pediatrics Guidelines (3-6ft), CT SDE "Do your best"
      - Hallways/Common Areas
      - Lunchroom
      - Lavatories
  - Standardized PPE Protocols
  - Contact Tracing Requirements
  - Decision tree for managing confirmed cases or suspected cases for students/adults
  - **Must have the capability to seamlessly transition to Full Distance Learning Plan (DLP)**





## Mitigation Strategies:

- Mitigation strategies will rely mostly on mitigation strategies of masks, handwashing/sanitizing and maintaining cohorts of students. There are very few options to completely spread students out. There are not enough classrooms to space students at 6' even if we create temporary classrooms in the large spaces like the cafeteria, gym, and library.
- Each classroom will be reorganized to maximize floor space for distancing. Extra bookshelves and furniture will be removed. Desks will be reorganized into spaced rows, etc.
- Priority will be made for In School learning at the elementary level. Middle School and High School may have more distance learning options.
- Lunch service is the biggest challenge
- Required training for staff and students on PPE, hygiene, and safety protocols.

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## Lunch Mitigation Strategies

- Lunch in rooms - would require food service to create “cart service” to rooms and will also require additional paraprofessional hours to supervise each classroom during lunch
- Mixed location lunches - some students in classrooms, some socially distanced in cafeteria - reduces additional paraprofessional hours needed
- Multiple location lunches - cafeteria, library, and gym all used as lunch locations - further reduces additional para hours but does not eliminate the need for more lunch supervision



## Preventative Measures for Adults

- Adults will be asked to socially distance from one another and/or wear masks throughout the school day.
- All adult meetings during the school day socially distanced and limited in participants
- Any full staff meetings will be held virtually
- Other meetings like PPTs will be held virtually when appropriate
- Other adults visiting the building will be restricted (outside presenters, volunteers, etc.)



## Potential Financial Impacts:

- Financial impacts will be dictated by what options are chosen for each school.
- Social Distancing impacts for all plans will result in:
  - Additional supervision (substitutes, paras, hallways, cafeteria, recess)
  - Additional materials and manipulatives (no sharing of supplies)
- PPE Costs
  - Masks
  - Cleaning supplies
  - Barriers for some spaces if social distancing can not occur
  - Gloves
  - Signage
- Additional Support at Arrival and Dismissal
  - Crossing guards, police, or additional staff hired to help with managing increased number of parent pick up and drop off.

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## Transportation Impacts

- Masks must be worn at bus stops, on the bus, and transitioning into the building.
- Assigned seating (with family members if possible)
- No bus changes (students can only ride one bus to and from school).
- Hand sanitizer available
- Depending on the model chosen, transportation to additional sites may need to be added for elementary students (if using multiple sites)



## Parameters that must be considered

- What are the unknowns?
  - Student or staff member tests positive
  - Staff members who are medically compromised
  - Students who are medically compromised
  - Staff members who fit categories identified by the CDC or need to care for dependents
  - Families who choose At-Home Learning
  - Changing limitations from CDC/American Pediatrics Association
- What happens if our regional transmission rate changes?
  - Low - operating a full capacity
  - Moderate - operating at a reduced capacity using a hybrid model
  - High - fully distance learning
- Surveys

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# SHS Options

Plan	Description
COHORT	<p>Students would stay with their COHORT all day</p> <p>Minimizes potential exposure as students would stay in one room and teachers would travel</p> <p>Focus on core classes.</p> <p>Would eliminate elective choice or most electives would be virtual. (e.g. students would be on a laptop getting their electives in a distance learning format.</p>



# SHS Options

Plan	Description	
<p><b>Regular Schedule</b> Students would receive normal block schedule</p>	<p>Phase 1</p>	<p><b>SEAMLESS TRANSITION TO DLP.</b> All students are in the building. Building specific safety guidelines. (PPE, traffic scheme, cafeteria). Ideal when region is at a low transmission metric.</p>
	<p>Phase 2</p>	<p>50% of students are in the building. A/B day but only half come in each day. Implemented when regional transmission metrics reach a predetermined level. A1, B1, A2, B2 groupings.</p>
	<p>Phase 3</p>	<p>Full Distance Learning</p>





# SHS Options

Plan	Description										
4X4 Block	<p>Students and Staff have less academic load each semester to manage. (e.g. student would have no more than 4 courses to manage at one time. Students meet every day with the same teacher.</p> <p>Each semester is a full 1 Credit class</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td><u>1st Sem</u></td> <td><u>2nd Sem</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Math</td> <td>Social Studies</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Science</td> <td>English</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Spanish</td> <td>PE/Health</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Elective</td> <td>Band</td> </tr> </table> <p>Elective Period could be re-purposed: (SAT Prep, SEL, tutoring to mitigate known disadvantages of the 4X4 schedule). Will require MOU with SEA.</p>	<u>1st Sem</u>	<u>2nd Sem</u>	Math	Social Studies	Science	English	Spanish	PE/Health	Elective	Band
<u>1st Sem</u>	<u>2nd Sem</u>										
Math	Social Studies										
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## Impact on SHS policy and procedures

- Opportunities to minimize numbers of students this year.
  - Seniors can be offered Distance Learning option. (\*Requires BOE approval)
    - Waive the six required credits and only take courses that are required for graduation
      - Must maintain four Carnegie Units for athletics
    - Dual Enrollment Option for Seniors to attend CC and their credits count as our credits as well towards graduation.
    - Early Graduation
      - Those students who just need a few credits to graduate can frontload the first semester and graduate early (come back for graduation in June)
- Schoolwide protocols
  - Cafeteria- increased number of lunch blocks to maximize social distancing
  - Backpacks/Lockers- Students will not be using lockers. They will be allowed one backpack to be used throughout the day.



## SMS Options

Cohorts - grouping students together into groups that remain mostly the same throughout the school day to limit the exposure, facilitate contact tracing, and reduce the number of students forced to quarantine as the result of a confirmed case.

A cohort would be between 18-23 students maintaining 3' social distancing with masks. Students will stay in their home room group for all 4 academic classes and other classes where feasible such as art and world language.

There would be some cohort mixing in band, chorus, and PE.



## SMS Options

The school day schedule will be changed:

- No Encore classes will be scheduled - this will allow the Survey classes like Band, Chorus, PE to still meet, but to have much smaller class sizes than last year about 24-36 students. The large classrooms for these groups will allow more effective social distancing.
- Students will stay in their home room for all academic classes and the teachers will switch rooms to teach each subject
- This schedule will be closely aligned with the new distance learning plan so that the class rosters and meeting times will be the same in or out.



# SMS Options

## Traffic Patterns -

Student movement to classes such as Band, Chorus, PE, Art, and World Language will followed prescribed patterns. When possible students will traffic outside to music and PE classes to provide a “mask break”

Students will report directly to home room upon arrival in the morning. This will require additional paraprofessional hours for student supervision



## SMS Options

### Lunches -

- Additional tables moved back from district office to increase the spacing of students
- Increase the number of lunch waves keep the number of students in the cafeteria to 90 students. This requires six lunches. The first lunch would have to start at 10 AM and lunch would be served over more than three hours each day
- Options include multi-locations lunches in larger spaces cafe, LMC, Gym or lunches in classrooms



# Elementary Options

Plan	Description
<p><b>Regular Schedule</b> with focus on creating "cohort of students"  (Following the AAP guidelines)</p>	<p>Desks @ 3' apart would allow for 20 students per class with other furniture removed  Students only leave classrooms for the bathroom and for recess and to pick up lunches (if needed), and related services.  Staff/Teachers switch classrooms (if needed) while students stay in classroom.  Subject area teachers would need to travel to classrooms. (Gr. 4 math teacher teaches math in the Gr. 4 ELA homeroom to that cohort of students)  Special Area teachers would travel to classrooms on revised schedule.</p>



# Elementary Options

Plan	Description
<p><b>Small Group Cohort Option</b></p> <p>PreK-3 at elementary school sites</p> <p>Gr. 4 &amp; 5 In school at alternative sites</p> <p>(*Following CDC guidelines)</p>	<p>Desks 6' apart would allow 10 - 12 students per classroom with other furniture removed.</p> <p>Requires each classroom to be split into 2 classrooms.</p> <p>Grades 4 &amp; 5 would be moved to alternative sites due to space restrictions.</p> <p>Additional staffing would be required to supervise students in reduced classes.</p>





## Impact on Elementary Policy and Procedures:

- Special Area classes take place in general classrooms. Consider rotation on a 6-8 week (for most grade levels) to minimize exposure.
- Students would have their own supplies at desks, eliminating sharing of items.
- K - 2: Consider masks only for transitions and when 3' can not be maintained OR hats w/shields for younger learners.
- Lunch in classrooms or small group cohorts in the lunchroom.
- Recess would take place outside but students would be assigned to locations and remain within their cohorts.
- Student arrival and dismissal procedures would be revised and additional staffing required.
- Protocols for hallways, bathrooms, transitioning in and out of building, etc.



## Special Education Impacts

- Least Restrictive Environment and Time with Non-Disabled Peers requirements (federal) outweigh cohort requirements
- Students with IEPs will have access to special education and related services classrooms/staff, as dictated by the IEP
- Special/Additional PPE considerations being given to these smaller spaces
- Early Childhood Office and State Dept of Ed are attempting to coordinate to provide greater guidance on best PPE practices for Prek age students
- Current guidance is that special ed parents who opt to keep their child at home, will constitute a change in placement, PPTs will need to be convened to design a revised plan for these students

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## Student Choice-At Home Learning

- Stonington High School & Stonington Middle School
  - Dependent on the number of staff and students that choose this option
    - If the numbers fit we would create a cohort that follows the Distance Learning Plan in a specific class format or a multi-age format
    - Alternatively, students could follow live broadcasts of their scheduled classes
- Elementary Schools
  - Dependent on the number of staff and students choosing “at home learning”
    - Option 1: Cohorts of “At Home Learning” are created across district and are assigned an “at home learning teacher”. (ie... 8 students from DMS and 7 students from WVSS will work with a teacher who can not return to school) OR multi-age groupings can be created for “at home learning”
    - Option 2: Students “at home” are assigned to a homeroom and live stream for whole class instruction and their small group instruction following a modified Distance Learning