

**Stonington Public Schools**  
**Reopening Plan Options for the School Year 2020-2021**  
**July 15, 2020**

**Introduction:** This report is being presented to the Reopening Task Force in preparation of the Board of Education decision as to how most appropriately reopen Stonington Public Schools in the fall. The Task Force will review this document on July 15th and the Board of Education will make a decision at a special meeting on July 21st.

**Parameters:** Many data sources have been used to inform the development of the plans for reopening including the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines, Connecticut State requirements and guidelines, American Pediatric Association guidelines, local health department guidelines, and staff and family surveys. Although similar parameters are considered by each source, the parameters related to COVID-19 do vary. **Student and staff safety must remain the primary concern in any reopening plan.** It is important to note, any in-person instructional plan inherently holds some health risk and each plan demonstrates the very real tension between health risks to the educational community and the associated cost of the plan.

**Updates:** Whatever plan is eventually approved by the Board of Education will hold with it the caveat that it may/will change based on a variety of factors including updated directions from the health department, State of Connecticut, and CDC. **Parents, families, teachers, and staff need to be prepared for a very quick transition from one model of instruction to another should the public health data necessitate a shift into a hybrid model or fully remote model. Families and students should also prepare for situations that result in a change of teacher or service provider depending upon changing needs of students and teachers to operate in a remote environment.** The impacts of plans will require negotiations with Stonington Education Association (SEA) and possibly other associations.

**Constants for All Plans:** The first section of this report lists several aspects that, although not detailed here, are likely to remain constant factors in all/many of the options presented. These constants include the following:

- 1) Program/academic implications
- 2) COVID-19/Reopening liaisons (District and school-based)
- 3) Communications
- 4) Transportation
- 5) Parent assistance and flexibility
- 6) Social-Emotional issues with students and staff members
- 7) Food service
- 8) PPE
- 9) Extracurricular offerings (athletics, clubs, drama, other activities)
- 10) Extended year (summer, holidays, Saturdays)
- 11) Health/Containment
- 12) Staffing implications and staffing flexibility

**Plans:** After extensive work and discussions, the following five plans/options are presented for consideration. Each plan includes comments and an analysis related to Health/Safety, Facilities, Personnel, and Costs. Any plan that involves staff/student in-person teaching and learning will also include options for staff/students to work/learn remotely.

**Plan 1A** - Meets CDC 6-foot distancing and state requirement for every student to attend school in person every day; requires additional classroom space and personnel; significant costs for facilities, transportation, and personnel.

**Plan 1B** - Meets CDC 6-foot distancing and state requirement for every student to attend school in person every day; requires split schedule AM/PM; eliminates opportunities for athletics and extracurricular activities.

**Plan 1C** - Meets CDC 6-foot distancing but does **not** meet state requirement for every student to attend school in person every day; provides for an A-B schedule where students attend school in person one day and online the next on a rotating basis.

**Plan 2** - Does not meet CDC 6-foot distancing; does meet American Pediatric Association requirement of 3-foot distancing and state requirement for every student to attend school in person every day; not as safe but uses current facility and staffing and gives all students the opportunity to attend every day.

**Plan 3** - Distance Learning Plan; will be an option with any of the above plans for families who do not want to return to school buildings until pandemic is over; also to be used if spike occurs and everyone has to return to distance learning.

**Concerns:** One of the many concerns with reopening is the requirement by the state to develop a plan to have every student attend school in person every day. The plans presented in this report include that option, but also include other concepts that provide greater safety precautions for students and staff members. The relative safety of each plan is summarized for consideration in the plan description. With a pandemic such as COVID-19, it is clear that no plan is 100% safe. Therefore, one of the options for consideration is to offer parents the choice between an at-home instructional plan or an in-building option.

#### **Constants for All Plans:**

- 1) Program/academic implications - All of the in-school plans will require academic program changes. For instance, in order to provide cohorts required by the State, elementary and middle school music, art and PE will need to be modified to provide programs in classrooms or in small cohort groups. Encore classes at SMS will be suspended for one year. SHS classes will not provide cohorts and electives will be limited. **It is imperative all stakeholders remember we continue to operate under the conditions of a global pandemic. There will be a loss of instructional time in any reopening plan that is approved.** Movement breaks and social-emotional needs will impact instructional time in any at-home learning model. **Additionally**, any in-person instructional time will be impacted due to new entry protocols, increased hand-washing, mask breaks, and transition procedures.
- 2) COVID-19/Reopening liaisons – The District will identify an individual staff member at each school site to be the primary contact for questions from parents. In addition, there will be one primary District liaison for parents/community to contact.
- 3) Communications – The District will hire a communications coordinator to relay important COVID/Reopening information to parents. Other communications efforts will include websites, press releases, letters/emails to parents and social media updates.
- 4) Transportation – The plan for District busing includes keeping bus capacity under 50%. This allows for only one student per seat. Per state requirements, all students riding a bus would be required to wear a mask during the ride. The District will provide a mask if a student does not have one with them. Bus monitors will be in place for the first two weeks. The need for continued supervision will be reevaluated at a later time. With this one student per seat format, the CDC recommended 6-foot social distancing guidelines cannot be met. However, if the District were to require the 6-foot requirement, an estimated increase of 28 buses would be required at a cost of over \$2M dollars per year. Therefore, the recommendation is to follow the American Pediatric Association recommendation of a 3-foot distancing on bus runs. Based on a recent parent survey, over 50% of parents responding stated they would be willing to transport their child to school thus avoiding the crowded bus situation. To mitigate possible viral exposure of students, families, staff, and bus

operators there will be **no changes** in bus assignments for any reason unless initiated by the District. For instance, **there will be no customized changes after the initial runs are set** to accommodate **changes** in after school care, after school visits to friends’ houses, or short term after school recreational activities. This is an area where parents and families will be called upon to plan ahead and cooperate with the District as the demands of the pandemic curtails our ability to shift transportation schedules.

- 5) Parent assistance – The District will ask parents to help in several ways. As noted above, parents will be asked to drive their students to school whenever possible. Parents will also be asked to provide masks whenever possible and to wash/clean the masks nightly. Parents may be asked to help in other ways in order to allow for a safe return to school.
- 6) Social-emotional issues with students and staff members – The District has implemented a special committee to consider social-emotional needs of students and staff members. This committee will make recommendations related to protocols for mental health services, re-entry activities, and other needs.
- 7) Food service – The food service staff will continue to offer breakfasts and meals to students. Depending on the eventual approved plan, this may include lunches delivered to classrooms, lunches served in the cafeteria, lunches provided for take home, or other protocols.
- 8) PPE – Based on state requirements, all students and staff must wear masks while in school buildings. There are a few exceptions such as medical conditions or when a teacher is providing instruction. These exceptions will be explained to students and staff members. There is a concern with requiring our youngest students (Pre-K, K, 1<sup>st</sup> grade) to wear masks all day. Hopefully the state will relax that requirement to something like Massachusetts has where those youngest students are not required to wear masks all day. In any case, mask “breaks” will be provided for all students and staff members. In addition, the District is ordering both desk shields and face shields. Teachers will be double protected by providing these devices in addition to the mask requirements. A document outlining all PPE measures and protocols is being developed and is in draft form. All PPE processes and procedures will reference the state reopening guidelines, and will be reviewed by the District Medical Advisor.
- 9) Extracurricular offerings (athletics, clubs, drama, other activities) – Administrative staff at Stonington High School are developing protocols for athletic practices and events consistent with CIAC guidelines. The District will use those protocols for all activities at all levels. These guidelines are anticipated to be available by August 1st.
- 10) Extended year (summer, holidays, Saturdays) – The District will follow state guidelines for offering extended year programs. At this time there are no plans to offer programs on Saturday or during typical school holiday times.
- 11) Health/Containment – Each school site will identify an area for “containment” in the event that a student or staff member becomes ill during the day. This area will be separate from the general nurse’s station area and appropriately supervised.
- 12) Staffing Implications - Each plan has an impact on staffing. Those impacts are described in each individual plan. With the strong possibility that plans will change or modifications will be necessary during the year, staffing may also change.

**Cost Estimate for Constants:**

1) Personnel costs for liaisons	\$ 20,000
2) Personnel costs for communications	\$ 15,000
3) Costs for PPE (masks and shields)	\$200,000
Total	\$235,000

There are other additional costs for each individual plan proposal as noted in the plan description. Costs may also increase as the year progresses due to unforeseen needs.

**Stonington Public Schools**  
**Reopening Plan Options for the School Year 2020-2021**  
**Plan 1A - Full State Model**

**Plan 1A** is designed to meet the basic CDC guidelines of requiring a minimum of 6-feet between student desks at all times. Upon a careful analysis of classrooms, to accomplish this 6-foot requirement limits student capacity to 12 students per classroom plus one teacher and one other adult.

**Health/Safety:** Plan 1A, while not 100% safe, does provide the basic safety elements suggested by the CDC. In addition to the 6-foot social distancing guideline, all students and staff will be required to wear masks while in school buildings. As mentioned in the previous section on Transportation, students will **NOT** meet the 6-foot social distancing requirement while riding the bus.

**Facilities:** By limiting classrooms to only 12 students, there will be a need for additional classroom space. An analysis was completed that indicated there would be an estimated 112 classrooms needed to accomplish this option if every classroom space was utilized with the 12:1 ratio as presented. The cost to add 112 classrooms is excessive and options are simply not available. The cost to add 112 portable classrooms exceeds \$8M and could not be accomplished by the time school starts.

**Personnel:** By limiting classrooms to 12 students, there would be a need to hire an additional 200 teachers or provide video conferencing to a nearby classroom for the other half of the students. Again, this is simply not feasible.

**Costs:** While this option provides the safest plan for all students and staff to return to school every day, the costs are simply not possible. The facility and personnel costs would exceed \$20M and facilities and teachers are not available. However, this option is presented as the State asked for a plan for every student to return to school every day.

**Stonington Public Schools**  
**Reopening Plan Options for the School Year 2020-2021**  
**Plan 1B - Split Session Model**

**Plan 1B** is designed to meet the basic CDC guidelines of requiring a minimum of 6-feet between student desks at all times. Upon a careful analysis of classrooms, to accomplish this 6-foot requirement limits student capacity to 12 students per classroom plus one teacher and one other adult. Plan 1B utilizes the current school facilities and staffing through a split day schedule. There would be two shifts each day. One group of students/teachers would attend from 7:00 AM until noon. The second group would attend from 2:00 PM until 7:00 PM. These times may need to be adjusted depending on cleaning/disinfecting time needed or other unanticipated needs.

**One of the downsides to this proposal is the limitation of extracurricular offerings.** With one group of students attending every afternoon, there would be no opportunity for every student to participate in athletics or other extracurricular offerings.

This option requires additional staffing and other expenses. With an AM/PM split schedule, busing would need to be doubled at an additional cost of approximately \$1.5M.

**Health/Safety:** Plan 1B, while not 100% safe, does provide the basic safety elements suggested by the CDC. In addition to the 6-foot social distancing requirement, all students and staff will be required to wear masks while in school buildings. Plexiglass shields and other clear partitions will be installed to help mitigate exposure. As mentioned in the previous section on Transportation, students will not meet the 6-foot social distancing requirement while riding the bus.

**Facilities:** This split schedule option fully utilizes each school facility. There would be no need for additional classrooms. However, to meet the 6-foot distancing requirement, classes would need to be split with 12 students per classroom. An additional 150 para positions would need to be created to monitor the split room. That cost is approximately \$3M.

**Personnel:** This schedule would also require additional administrative staff, clerical staff, paras, hall monitors, nurses and other staffing. The estimate for additional staff is \$3,400,000 annually.

**Costs:** While this plan meets CDC and state requirements, there are significant personnel and transportation costs. In order to clean and disinfect between the two sessions, four FTE custodial staff would be needed for a cost of approximately \$280,000. Transportation costs would double with an additional \$1.5M needed for the double sessions. Additional administration, paras, clerical, and nurses would require approximately \$400,000. The total additional costs for Plan 1B would be over \$2M.

The additional costs for this option:

1) Paras/monitors/other	\$ 3,400,000
2) Custodians (4 x \$70,000)	\$ 280,000
3) Transportation	\$ 1,500,000
4) Bus monitors first two weeks	\$ 8,000
5) Costs for constants (liaison, communication, PPE)	235,000
<b>Total for Plan 1B</b>	<b>\$ 5,423,000</b>

**Stonington Public Schools**  
**Reopening Plan Options for the School Year 2020-2021**  
**Plan 1C – Hybrid Model**

**Plan 1C** is designed to meet the basic CDC guidelines of requiring a minimum of 6-feet between student desks at all times. This plan does **NOT** meet the state requirement of providing in school opportunities for every student every day. Upon a careful analysis of classrooms, to accomplish this 6-foot requirement limits student capacity to 12 students per classroom plus one teacher and one other adult. Plan 1C utilizes the current school facilities and staffing through an A-B schedule. **Basically students would attend in-school two days per week and participate remotely on the off days resulting in only half the students being in school on any one day.** One day per week everyone would be teaching and learning remotely to provide for deep cleaning/disinfecting. During the remote learning day, students would be provided instruction via video of the classroom.

This option utilizes the current facilities and staffing, limits students on site by 50%, maintains the current transportation budget, and reduces the need for PPE as only one-half of the student population is in the building on any one day.

**Health/Safety:** This Plan 1C, while not 100% safe, it does provide the basic safety elements suggested by the CDC. In addition to the 6-foot social distancing requirement, all students will be required to wear masks while in school buildings. Clear shields and other clear partitions will be installed to help with distancing. As mentioned in the previous section on Transportation, students will not meet the 6-foot social distancing requirement while riding the bus. However, with only 50% of students attending, distancing on buses should be better than Plan 1A or Plan 1B.

**Facilities:** This A-B schedule option fully utilizes each school facility. There would be no need for additional classrooms, only additional desks for certain classrooms to replace smaller tables to ensure the 6-foot social distancing between students and staff.

**Personnel:** This schedule would utilize current certificated staffing. There would be a need for additional video technology, hall and restroom monitors, custodians, and items mentioned earlier under constants.

**Costs:**

The additional costs for this option:

1) Paras/monitors (8 x \$30,000)	\$240,000
2) Custodians (4 x \$70,000)	\$280,000
3) Desks	\$ 15,000
4) Bus monitors first two weeks	\$ 8,000
5) Costs for constants (liaison, communication, PPE)	\$235,000
6) Video technology	\$220,000

Total for Plan 1C \$998,000

**Note:** This hybrid model may not be optimal for re-opening given the current status of southeastern Connecticut as a low risk for infection. However, it is a likely model should Stonington need to pivot from a full in-person model to a hybrid model as recommended by the local health department, Connecticut Department of Public Health, Connecticut State Department of Education and the Governor's Office based upon a status change from low risk to moderate risk of infection.

**Stonington Public Schools**  
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**Plan 2 - American Pediatrics Model**

**Plan 2** is designed to meet the basic American Pediatric Association guidelines of requiring a minimum of 3-feet between student desks at all times. This plan does **NOT** meet the CDC guidelines of providing a minimum of 6-feet of distancing. Plan 2 utilizes the current school facilities and staffing through a regular schedule. Due to the 3-foot guideline, this option does not offer the same degree of mitigation as the 6-foot social distancing option.

**Health/Safety:** Plan 2, while not 100% safe, does provide the basic safety elements suggested by the American Pediatric Association. In addition to the 3-foot social distancing requirement, all students will be required to wear masks while in school buildings. Protective shields and other clear partitions will be installed to help with distancing. As mentioned in the previous section on Transportation, students will not meet the 6-foot social distancing requirement while riding the bus.

**Facilities:** This option fully utilizes each school facility. There would be no need for additional classrooms.

With classes at capacity for students, some furniture would need to be replaced. Tables would need to be swapped out with student desks. The cost for this additional furniture is approximately \$15,000.

**Personnel:** This schedule would utilize current certificated staffing. There would be a need for additional hall and restroom monitors and custodial staff for cleaning and disinfecting. Additional monitors, paras, and custodians would cost approximately \$520,000.

**Costs:**

The additional costs for this option:

1) Paras/monitors (8 x \$30,000)	\$240,000
2) Custodians (4 x \$70,000)	\$280,000
3) Desks	\$ 15,000
4) Bus monitors first two weeks	\$ 8,000

Total for Plan 2 \$543,000

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**Plan 3 – Distance Learning Model**

**Plan 3** meets the CDC guidelines and the state requirement to provide a fully distance learning program for students/families interested in working from home only. The District will attempt to match the number of families requesting this option with teachers who cannot attend in-building programs. A final staff and final family survey will be administered after the plan is adopted by the Board of Education.

The distance learning option will be available for students/families who chose to do all instruction online.

**This option will also be used for all students if schools need to close again due to local spikes in the COVID-19 virus.**

**Health/Safety:** This option is the safest option for students and staff members but does not provide for the direct instruction so important for learning or for the social emotional development that cannot occur online. Teachers have done a great job providing quality instruction, but online programs cannot duplicate what teachers can do in a classroom setting.

**Facilities:** Under this option facilities would remain closed with the possible exception of using some space for special needs, mental health programs or extracurricular offerings.

**Personnel:** This schedule would utilize current staffing. The issue with distance learning is trying to match students/families who desire this program with teachers who request to teach online.

**Costs:** There are minimal additional costs for this program.