

Q/A Regarding Reopening – Task Force

Personal Employment Issues; Exposure to COVID; Work Conditions; Sick/FMLA Leave; Job Related:

- 1) How will we accommodate students and staff with compromised health or those with family member who are compromised?
- 2) Many teachers have health conditions that place them on the CDC list of at-risk individuals; in addition, many teachers have family members who are at-risk. The national conversation has emphasized the low statistical likelihood of students becoming ill but has virtually disregarded the risk to adults who would be teaching and supporting those students in their learning. Please explain what remote-teaching options will be in place for teachers who must put their own health and the health of their loved ones first. Will these options vary by grade level based on the varied ability of students to be successful with remote learning expectations?
- 3) How will the district prioritize the health concerns of the staff? Many teachers are considered high-risk or live with loved ones who are. How will assigning teachers to work remotely be decided?
- 4) How will the district specifically handle teachers who are pregnant? This question is particularly important to me, as I will be in the last 6 weeks of my pregnancy if schools reopen on schedule. The added exposure to contracting the virus puts not only myself, but my baby at risk as well. Contracting the virus aside, I cannot afford to have to quarantine if there is a case at SHS and miss weekly appointments, etc. I do not plan on going on maternity leave until the baby arrives, and I am already exhausting my sick days for that maternity leave. I am sure many other expecting women in the district are in a similar situation and share the same concerns.
- 5) If a teacher has to quarantine for other reasons (perhaps their child attends another district that closes and asks families to quarantine), will that teacher be expected to use their own sick time? What about teacher who cannot afford to use -14 sick days (or don't have that many)? Will they be expected to take that time unpaid?
- 6) Do teachers need to use their sick leave when someone in one of their classes who is positive necessitates a 14-dy quarantine? Or if we come into contact with someone in our personal lives with Covid?
- 7) If teachers are out of the building due to quarantining, are they still required to teach virtually?
- 8) Will teachers still be evaluated on the evaluation system this year, recognizing that students' cooperative work will not be possible?
- 9) If childcare is lost due to the pandemic, can teachers take leave to care for their children? This past spring was incredibly difficult to manage with remote teaching (I did a lot of my planning/distance learning administration/grading at night) and if there are any required live meeting times that follow the normal school schedule, having my own

- child at will make it impossible. And if so would we be required to make sub plans for an extended leave?
- 10) If a teacher gets a low level cold/illness that is not COVID but causes coughing, runny nose, etc that we would normally just go to work with, are we required to stay home, and if so does sick time need to be taken?.
 - 11) Another concern is for the staff who have auto immune issues, but do not qualify under the current guidelines for disability. For many of us, we are very prone to getting ill easily and once ill continue to pick up new illnesses. This means making a decision between a job we love, along with our income, and our personal safety. Unlike other professions, we don't qualify for short term disability and many of us don't have large amounts of sick days due to our underlying illness. Stonington has always been wonderful about taking care of staff's health and I know you will be looking for options for those of us that really are facing health concerns.
 - 12) I am wondering if I (or a family member in my household) have to be quarantined, would I have paid sick leave to cover that time? Will I be responsible for Sub plans, etc?

Health Protocols; PPE; Testing; Containment; Transportation:

- 1) Will temperature checks and hand sanitizing be required for staff and students to enter school and board busses?
- 2) How will cohort integrity be maintained if students are on neighborhood busses at or near capacity?
- 3) Will busses be sanitized following each run?
- 4) How do we manage bathroom trips for students? We typically ask kids to go first/last few minutes of class. Students always claim there is a long line for the restroom.
- 5) One question is about mask-wearing at school. I am assuming that children naturally will have mask breaks throughout the daytime when they are eating snacks and having lunch. Knowing that children have a harder time social distancing when they are running around excited on the playground. I am wondering if children are required to keep their masks at recess. If not I am also looking for what information, regulations or scientific research you are using to tell families that it is safe for a child to take their mask off when outside (besides the obvious transmission is less likely reasoning).
- 6) Understanding teachers have unions and deserve most respect and understanding during this process, will your teachers be getting breaks in the classroom? If so who will be covering for them, and will that person have been in contact with many of the classrooms therefore disrupting the idea of a cohort in keeping germs just the classroom?
- 7) Knowing that OEC has said children birth-6 are not required to wear facial masks will you still be enforcing children under the age of 6 who will wear a mask to school? What about if the mask becomes a distraction to the child and in return causes more facial touching instead of reducing the amount of touching? Are you looking to have children wear face guards instead? Some districts in other states (MA) has stated 1-2 graders are

- not required to wear face guards because of these reasonings, is this something you would also consider?
- 8) Will there be a limit to what children are bringing into the classroom? e.g. just lunch boxes.
 - 9) One question about reopening, are you requiring families who travel out of the state for work or recreational purposes to self-quarantine for 14 days before coming back to the school?
 - 10) Has there been any discussion about face shields vs face masks? Would teachers be able to wear face shields rather than masks?
 - 11) I do have two questions about what protocol will be put in place for each situation. I know there is a lot of situations that will be played out but these two keep coming up for me.
 - a. First, if a family chooses to go on a vacation, visit family or for any other reason leaves the state and goes to any hot spots, what will they be required to do once they arrive back home? Right now, the state requires the family to self-quarantine for two weeks. Will this be enforced at school as well? Will the students not be allowed back in school until the two weeks are over? Will they be able to get tested to come back before the two weeks? My concern is families who choose to travel will end up putting the whole school at a higher risk if strong protocols aren't put in place before this happens.
 - b. Second, what is the plan for the classroom, individual school and/or district if there is a positive student or staff member? Does this protocol also extend to students and staff members families? If a staff member's husband/wife/significant other tests positive is the staff member required to stay home?
 - 12) Will the schools provide the students with face masks?
 - 13) Will Covid testing be available? If not, where would it be available?
 - 14) For a variety of reasons, students will often come to school in the morning even if they are feeling ill. We have had students vomit as they come through the front door and then have been unable to reach a parent for several hours to pick up a child. How will these situations be handled if a student arrives at school presenting with potential Covid symptoms and a parent is not available to transport the child home?
 - 15) How would the district plan to address reports that a student/family is not disclosing positive Covid-19 diagnosis for the student or family member living in their home?
 - 16) How will we provide oversight regarding directives for washing of hands after using the restroom, or touching potentially contaminated surfaces?
 - 17) How often will students and staff be afforded an opportunity for a mask break during the school day? How and where will these breaks occur and what type of supervision will be required and/or provided?
 - 18) Under a cohort model, specialist will be interacting with students from multiple cohorts on a daily basis, how would this impact a post-infection quarantine? If there are going to be rolling quarantines based on positive tests, how often could an employee end up serving a mandatory quarantine in one school year? Each time we are potentially

- exposed, we are unable to not only work on site, but also are restricted from moving about in our own communities or sharing common areas with our family members.
- 19) Is Dr. Blefeld involved in the advisory Task Force process?
 - 20) How will we distinguish between signs and symptoms of other illnesses or allergies, versus signs and symptoms of Covid-19 when making a determination for quarantine? There are studies that indicate occurrences of false negative Swan tests in children and adolescents, even when examination of their lungs confirms the presence of the "broken glass appearance" that is a known marker exclusive to this virus? Eg: will students or staff be excluded from school bases upon seasonal allergies that may not be controlled?
 - 21) Do we have a plan for contact tracing and if so, who will be responsible for follow up and notifications?
 - 22) If new students attempt to enroll in the SPS from another state, will they be required to self-quarantine for 14 days? If so, will remote learning, and/or other supports be provided during that period?
 - 23) QUARANTINE...What if my child (who attends school in a different district) or my husband (working at a large local employer) are exposed and I am required to quarantine with them, AND I am not sick or showing symptoms: Can I teach remotely from my home into the classrooms at SMS (because I'm not really "sick", it's a safety precaution) OR do I have to take "sick" time and create sub plans for the 10 days I am quarantining? (Experience tells me, also, we do not have enough subs, nor do we have subs ready & willing & have the content knowledge to provide 10 days of math, in my case, instruction). What if a student on my team gets exposed or contracts COVID? Will we be told, will we be tested (if contracted by a student) and who will have to quarantine (see above for remote teaching question)? How will that student under quarantine receive instruction & learn during that period? It is important to note that while the student is cohorting (3 feet apart), the core teachers are moving from room to room, possibly risking further exposure.
 - 24) And, I would imagine, if student(s) contract COVID, many families may remove their children from school and into remote learning before schools "close" (if it comes to that again). Is there an entry/exit strategy for families to move between in-person schooling & DL as they see fit for the safety of their students?
 - 25) How disruptive to instruction do you view going in and out of school based on COVID tests results, children or adults that exhibit any type of symptoms waiting for test results (that can take as long as 2 weeks to receive)?
 - 26) Do you view it as more or less disruptive to families and children to go in and out of in person or online learning rather than to make a decision to instruct at home vs. a possible scenario or 1 week in, 2 week out, etc...

Instruction; Academics; Distance Learning; Cohorts; Programs; Behavior/Consequences; Substitutes; Reopening Plans:

- 1) The concept of cohorting seems to make very little sense at the middle- high- school levels because many of our students are in contact with wider groups of people outside of school hours. We have students participating in sports teams, after-school clubs, and working after-school jobs. In addition, many individuals will still choose to socialize with their friends outside of school hours. With no control whatsoever on what our students do outside of school hours, what other measures will be taken to identify and isolate asymptomatic and symptomatic infected individuals on a regular basis?
- 2) I am confused about how related services impact cohorts. How are related services impacted if a student in a class has been diagnosed with Covid-19? If the service provider has seen that child, does the related service provider quarantine herself? Do all of the other students she has seen also quarantine themselves?
- 3) If another student in a class in which the related service provider has seen someone tests positive, does the related service provider quarantine herself? What about the other students she has seen?
- 4) If students remove their masks during class can they be sent out of the room for non-compliance? Will they get breaks throughout the day to take their masks off outside?
- 5) Does the related service provider provide distance therapy during that period? If not, does the related service provider get paid?
- 6) My question is regarding eighth grade math. Typically, this is the first year in our district that provides aptitude leveling.
 - a. Will the advanced math option be available for the upcoming school year?
 - b. Have the assessments for the previous 7th graders been completed, and if so, how can parents be informed of the 8th grade class recommendation?
 - c. Might the task force consider the advanced math class to be a foundation for identifying pandemic cohorts?
- 7) Will teachers have the option to choose to do distance learning if they are uncomfortable returning due to people in their close personal circle having high risk status?
- 8) ELT Cohorts – ELT was not mentioned in the comments, my concern is over the size of the groupings for ELT. As ELT is meant to be an intervention, best practice is to work with groups smaller than 18-23 as mentioned in the comments as the size of the cohorts. Please advise as to the plan for ELT.
- 9) Advisory – Advisory was not mentioned in the comments, will advisory continue in this environment?
- 10) Is there a possibility of families choosing a distance learning 3 days a week and on-campus learning 2 days a week option for their family to limit the amount of time their child is at school and still be able to socialize or a ½ day schedule?
- 11) What options are in place for students who have a history of physical aggression that has required physical contact with staff members?

- 12) Will there be clear parameters for response for any student who is unable or unwilling to comply with new rules and adopted practices in the school setting or on the buses? If there is a pattern of behavior that is deemed to be a symptom of a student's disability, but creates an unacceptable level of risk for others in the building, how will that be addressed?
- 13) DL...A hybrid learning model for SMS was not presented, but alluded to in the discussions, depending on the number of students/families & staff who choose not to attend school in person. As of 7/8, 13% of district families indicated they prefer the 100% remote option and 28% of SMS staff prefer to work 100% remotely. How will instruction be delivered to those students whose families choose not to return to school?
- 14) STUDENT MONITORING...What is the plan to monitor students who arrive well before the busses and are required to go straight to their cohort room? Many classrooms are not open that early, and teachers who arrive early are often preparing for their school day prior to the contractual beginning of the school day. What is the plan to monitor the cohort of students in the classroom as teachers move from room to room between classes?

Facilities/Equipment; Air Quality; Temperature; Furniture and Equipment:

- 1) I'm worried about reducing the 6 ft social distancing suggestion to 3 ft in the classroom between desks. Is this safe and in accordance with CDC recommendations? Also, 6th grade LA/SS teachers will likely have 23 students in their classrooms. Is it even physically possible to keep a distance of 6 ft with this many students in a classroom?
- 2) My question for the committee is in regards to the air quality and mitigation of Covid-19 through our ventilation system in our school buildings. What is the plan for monitoring the heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems in regards to the CDC recommendations to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in buildings? According to the CDC, air conditioners may spread the virus in small, contained spaces (see the link below) and circulating fresh air is considered the best practice. Could someone clarify how the air quality in all of the buildings is being monitored and what changes/actions will be implemented to ensure air quality safety? What are the plans to mitigate the spread of Covid-19 through the circulating air exchange?
- 3) Specifically, as the elementary and high school buildings are equipped with central air conditioning, will scrubbers or medical grade air filters be installed?
- 4) How will SMS increase air circulation given the window designs in many classrooms?
- 5) Will the district be finding more suitable environments for related services to provide therapies if their current offices are too small to allow for social distancing or they do not have ventilation?

- 6) Will temperatures at the high school be set to a level that would make wearing a mask comfortable? In the past, temperatures have been erratic and have in recent years been very warm especially at the start of the year.
- 7) In addition to mitigation strategies such as disinfectant, PPE, distancing, etc. presented in the reopening plans, I am wondering what the district is doing to address the air quality/ventilation since science posted as recently as yesterday indicates evidence of airborne transmission (versus known transmission via droplets). I was hoping to learn there would be considerations in the proposed plans that considered what the document from the CT Adapt, Advance Achieve plan included.
- 8) I am also wondering how the full in-person plans will address what will happen if a class/teacher must quarantine for 2 weeks. Due to the already lacking number of substitute teachers in the region, I have concerns. I believe multiple scenarios and protocols will need to be considered and be in place that will look different at the three levels. At the elementary level, where students with one or two teachers all day, it's a little easier...if one teacher is sick they need coverage for 20 students or they could all engage in distance learning if it was classroom-based contact/transmission. At the middle and high school level where students have multiple teachers, what would happen? For example, Student A tests positive – Student A sees 5-7 educators a day – would all 5-7 teachers then be in quarantine until they receive test results? Another question about the scenario where a class is exposed and moves to distance learning is what if that teacher is too ill to engage in distance learning?
- 9) In reading documents provided by the Task Force and CSDE, along with documents from the CDC and WHO, I have a concern regarding in person teaching/learning next year that I have not seen addressed completely: room ventilation/temperature. The most recent info from the WHO is that there is “emerging evidence” of airborne transmission of the virus, and that adequate ventilation is key to lowering that risk. While I cannot speak for either the elementary schools or SHS< I know that many rooms at SMS are hot, stagnant, and have poor air flow/ventilation. I can't imagine that air conditioning will be installed in all these rooms, and I'm wondering if/how the district plans to address this. A secondary component is that mask wearing in these uncomfortably hot rooms could lead to students/staff becoming overheated, faint, dehydrated, etc.
- 10) Furniture removal from classrooms – Before removing the “extra” furniture as mentioned, will classroom teachers have the opportunity to reorganize those materials? And label the furniture so that when we get to the post-covid world we can utilize those bookshelves and tables again?
- 11) I am also wondering how you will be handling ventilation in your large buildings to ensure each child will not be breathing in air that is taking longer to vent out of the building.
- 12) One question I feel has yet to be addressed is your bathroom cleaning protocol. Will you have a member of your janitorial staff cleaning the bathroom after every child used to insure cross-contamination of students? Will there be wiped containers in the bathrooms for the child to wipe down the handles on toilets or faucets themselves after use? If so what type of child-friendly products (following EPA guidelines) are you

- looking to use and will there be a support staff to monitor that this is actually being done? What will your cleaning protocol be at the end of the school day?
- 13) Thank you all for your work on this committee. I can imagine that you are faced with incredibly hard decisions. I wanted to share a few thoughts regarding the opening of school. The first is that SMS does not have air conditioning throughout the building. I believe this was something that was on the books to be done this summer, however with the budget cuts I don't know if this was done. The building was very hot last September and I have concerns about the students with masks on during that heat. Students also brought water bottles to class to help with the heat. This would require them taking their masks off to access the water.
 - 14) Are we able to use fans during the hot months in the Middle School?
 - 15) There have been recommendations regarding fresh air as a preventative measure, but our building windows do not open. Also the air quality and circulation of air has been a chronic challenge at SHS. Are these concerns that can be addressed?
 - 16) Will all personnel be provided with cleaning supplies and adequate PPE or are we expected to make individual purchases?
 - 17) VENTILATION / AC...As many are aware, ventilation is poor at SMS (limited windows open) and there is no AC in the majority of classrooms. It routinely gets over 80 in classrooms and the SDE guidelines state that standing fans to move air around are not permitted. With 18-23 students and likely 2 adults, 3 feet apart, in masks, without any cross air movement, will make for a difficult learning environment. Are portable AC units being considered or provided for SMS classrooms?
 - 18) What is the plan for improving air quality and filtration in the schools?
 - 19) What is the plan for ensuring a reasonable learning and working temperature for children and staff in non-air conditioned spaces who's rooms have been recorded upwards of 93-95 degrees (specifically Stonington Middle School).

General Questions; Task Force; CDC/APA; Communications:

- 1) Is there, or could there also be, a task force of educators, parents, community members and administrators to simultaneously be building a virtual model that supports students need for academic, emotional and mental support. First, there are many families that will be opting for the virtual model and I don't want the onus to be entirely on them to make sure all of those needs are met. Second, it seems very likely that students will need to pivot to virtual learning – either as an entire district and/or by cohort or individual if there is an exposure or outbreak. This seems too big of a possibility to not have a very well considered plan in place. If this is not possible, can there at least be a parent on the task force who is planning to opt for the distance learning model.
- 2) Please clarify why there is only one teacher on the Reopening Task Force. Parents, students, and administrators are all represented more than teachers on the reopening task force, yet most of the decisions made will have to be implemented by teachers.
- 3) Why are there not more teachers on the task force? It seems like there should be a minimum of four teachers (to cover/advocate for the elementary, middle and high

school levels, as well as special ed). No one knows more about how a classroom works (and what is actually feasible) than a teacher – and these changes directly affect us and what our jobs will entail on a daily basis.

- 4) Meeting notice – I am trying to find out if you have a newsletter, or some other means in which I can learn about upcoming events and meetings? Is there a way to join a mailing list? How do you get notices of meetings out to the public?
- 5) The website indicates to visit the District's website for links to the informational documents shared at the Committee meeting. I went to the Town of Stonington website, and could not find these documents. Can you please provide a link?
- 6) GUIDELINES FOR REOPENING...Gov Cuomo just announced specific reopening guidelines for schools in New York, that the transmission rate be under 5% (Well done, CT, under 1%) AND that region is in "Phase 4", which roughly equates to CT's Phase 3. Gov. Lamont has held CT at Phase 2 with no large indoor gatherings (>25) permitted. Aren't these two objectives mutually exclusive (that we are in Phase 2 and schools reopening to capacity)? What does the Governor or SDE have to say about this? I know the goal is to reopen schools, and it's an excellent, admirable goal that I support, but why & how can schools reopen at capacity when a movie theater cannot? (I know that's not your question to answer, but it does beg an explanation)
- 7) What thought process is going into the proposal of reopening schools now when it was not safe to do so in March?

Comments:

- 1) I appreciate the sentiment shared by most on the task force that their priority is to make sure that the students are provided academic, social and mental support in the safest way possible. I sincerely hope this continues to be the motivation for all those on the task force. To me this means the potential and hope for in person learning and also the distinct possibility that this isn't possible for some or all students at various times throughout the year.
- 2) When I hear "our main priority is getting the schools open in the fall" I am very disheartened because it doesn't seem to allow or recognize the need for adaptation to circumstances well beyond any of our control. We heard over and over in the meeting that the situation changes daily. Just last week we learned that Phase 3 of reopening was postponed which of course put months of well thought plans for many businesses on hold or cancelled all together. We should all recognize the possibility that in one or two months the landscape will be vastly different that it is today and re-opening will be impossible or all of these plans will need to change drastically before reopening.
- 3) Thank you to all members of this task force. I am grateful for your thoughtful hard work.
- 4) Thank you for your time and consideration.

- 5) I first would like to say that I appreciate the time the Task Force is spending on trying to put a plan together to reopen schools. It is not an easy task by any means. With that being said, I do have some questions.
- 6) Thank you for all that you do for our students, parents and staff.
- 7) First, I wish to offer my appreciation for all participating on the Reopening Task Force. Your time and thoughtful deliberation is much appreciated.
- 8) Technology - In order to provide and maintain consistency of instruction to all cohorts, the technology availability in each classroom absolutely needs to be the same, and includes but is not limited to, an overhead projector onto a whiteboard or similar smart surface, quick and efficient connectivity to that technology, software and hardware to support those multiple platforms, and an ELMO (I could cart my own around, see next question)
- 9) Carts – (Teacher mobility) As a teacher who has moved around a building to teach in multiple classrooms in the past, it is essential to have a cart that is large enough to carry the above mentioned ELMO (if necessary), personal laptop and other needed technology, classroom supplies (both teacher materials like whiteboard markers/erasers and student materials including but not limited to math supplies and textbooks), handouts and materials given to and collected from students.
- 10) Additional Supplies – As we move through the classrooms, having the daily learning targets, EQ and HW assignments on a portable whiteboard is more efficient than writing that every time I enter a classroom, so these would need to be made available to teachers, please. Also if students cannot share supplies from class to class or day to day, then additional supplies will need to be purchased (such as rulers, transparency sheets, whiteboard markers and erasers, individual whiteboards, protractors, colored pencils, highlighters, etc), there will need to be something relatively large (at least a 9x12 bag or envelope) to hold all of these items and a place to leave them in each cohort classroom.
- 11) I have a few questions regarding opening the school year distance and in-person learning. Although I am aware that this is also an ever-changing situation with new regulations and policies given daily, I am hoping you would be able to give a little more guidance as we plan to adjust our work schedules to best fit the needs in keeping our children and families safe.
- 12) First, thank you for your time and effort as you work to ensure a safe return for students and staff. I'm sure your reason for the cohort plan of organization at the middle school is to minimize social contact. Although the cohort organization could be very workable, I foresee difficulties with requiring students to remain in class while teachers rotate through the classes. I have a suggestion that will still allow cohort organization yet will be safer than the current suggestion.
If students are organized in cohorts it's true that the number of contacts each individual student will have can be minimized. However, I think we will have other issues of attention and focus if students have to remain in the same classroom for all their classes. Additionally, and I feel this is extremely important, teachers will be required to move from class to class in this scenario. This is much less safe and created the potential for greater virus exposure. I think it's important for teacher to have control

over their own personal space, their own personal objects, their own desks that can be protected from anyone else touching. I would like to know that, other than custodial cleaning, I am the only person to touch my desk, my chair, my drawers, etc. Some of us are over 60, some of us have underlying health conditions or live with people who have underlying health conditions. This puts teachers at greater risk. If instead, students passed with their cohort in a particular rotation to the next class, this could be avoided. For example, in the 8th grade hallway, students on the Gold team for example could leave Science and go to Math lining up to the left of the Math door if necessary as students leave Math and go to L.A. etc. I think this will minimize student exposure to each other and will allow teachers to protect themselves as much as possible.

- 13) I would like to second Dr. Riley's commendation of Peter Anderson. A few weeks ago I forwarded him an article regarding the aerosol spread of live virus when public toilets are flushed. He had already planned for the purchase of seat covers.
- 14) Rose Levine, a 5th grade teacher in Cambridge, MA, has written a thoughtful, well documented article on reopening schools which was excerpted in the Washington Post July 10th. Attached is the complete article.
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1IAQndRjnya96JZOwf4HgPBBk-RwOCrtO1efSkgPiiUc/mobilebasic>
- 15) Given that the Town Protocols for doing business in the places such as the Town Hall and other public places are the following:
 - TOWN CLERK'S VAULT WILL BE BY APPOINTMENT ONLY. APPOINTMENTS WILL BE IN 1 HOUR INCREMENTS & ONLY 2 PEOPLE AT A TIME WILL BE ALLOWED TO ACCESS THE VAULT. BEFORE ENTERING THE TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE EVERYONE WILL BE REQUIRED TO WEAR A MASK & GLOVES WILL BE PROVIDED.
 - ONLY TWO PEOPLE WILL BE ALLOWED AT THE TOWN CLERK'S FRONT COUNTER AT ONE TIME. SOCIAL DISTANCING OF 6 FEET WILL BE REQUIRED.
 - How do we impose the same set of rules for students and teachers in public spaces as for other town employees and it's locations?
- 16) What thought process is going into the proposal of reopening schools now when it was not safe to do so in March?