

STONINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Parents and Families,

It's been a busy summer with the ever changing landscape due to the COVID-19 pandemic and keeping current on its implications for the upcoming school year. The Stonington Public Schools Reopening Task Force has met twice and discussed various options for reopening with both district and building leaders. Each plan was explored in the context of what guidance, requirements, and considerations have been published by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Governor's Office, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). The safety of our students and staff remains at the center of all conversations and decisions.

Over 130 questions were generated as a result of contributions and issues raised by the Task Force and have been categorized for us to respond to and post on our website sometime next week. Several of the questions are easy to answer and others regarding personnel decisions/work status are more complicated and will need to be addressed on a case by case basis. As we get clarification from the state and our attorneys we will publish that information as well on the website.

On Tuesday, July 21st the Board of Education will decide the appropriate model for the reopening of our schools this fall. [Five different proposals](#) will be brought forward for discussion and consideration each with its own safety and financial implications. By Friday, July 24th the plan needs to be submitted to the Connecticut State Department of Education. It is imperative all families are clear that they need to prepare to pivot quickly from an in person model of instruction to either a hybrid model (e.g. two days in person instruction, three days remote instruction) or a total at home learning model.

Clear direction from the Board means our plans for reopening will begin to firm up and allow us to provide more details to you of what to expect come the fall. Those details will allow you to make an informed decision in regards to sending your child or children back to school in person or to select an at home learning model for the start of the school year. A follow up survey will be disseminated during the week of August 9th. Before the survey is sent out a reminder from the District Office will be sent to you about the importance of completing this in a timely fashion. The data will be used to plan bus routes, schedule classes, assign teachers and is critical to have for planning purposes.

In the meantime it is advisable, especially if you have a young child, to reinforce the importance of wearing a mask during the school day. With a few exceptions, staff and students will be required to wear masks for the safety of the school population and the community for the majority of the school day. This is a requirement by the Governor and the CSDE for reopening of the schools. We suggest your child wear a mask for short intervals over the next few weeks to practice and acclimate to wearing it and build up to long increments of time as the beginning of the school year approaches. This will make his or her transition back to the classroom much smoother for your child.

With several new protocols coming into play regarding the loading and unloading of buses, mask requirements, handwashing protocols, traffic patterns and transitions during the day the staff is developing video tutorials for you and your children to review before the start of the school year. These informational videos will allow you to see familiar faces from each school demonstrate the new processes and familiarize you and your children with the new expectations before returning to school.

Expect more frequent communications after the Board's decision on Tuesday regarding the reopening of our schools. Thank you for your continued support and the patience you are demonstrating as this situation is and will continue to be very dynamic in nature.

Stay well and enjoy these fleeting summer days.

Dr. Van Riley
Superintendent