



# **Greenwich Public Schools Return to School Planning Question & Answers**

*The District would like to thank all families and staff members for their thoughtful submissions. Our team has combined the same or similar submissions to help streamline this Q&A document.*

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## **Absences and Attendance**

**How will absences be recorded? Will we need a doctor's note for a cough in order for it to be excused? What warrants being able to come back to school?**

Absences will be recorded through our student information system (Aspen). If a student shows signs of COVID he or she would need to quarantine or gain a doctor's note for clearance.

**If a student tests positive, will the absence count against them?**

We will be adjusting the attendance policy to support students who must quarantine in order to be sure that students do not feel pressure to attend school in person when he/she tests positive.

**How will Greenwich High School take attendance on days when students are at home for their Remote Learning Days? Will the same attendance policy as usual be in place this year? (Possible loss of credit for a 6x class upon the 11th absence in a semester.)**

Attendance will be taken through Google Meets Enterprise as it records each student who has logged on to the platform. The teacher will then put that attendance into Aspen. Credit loss will be modified based on COVID precautions.

## **Cleaning**

**Is there a protocol if cleaning supplies and PPE come into short supply or completely unavailable?**

Yes, if supplies are inadequate for school operations, the district will return to full remote learning. This issue occurred last March as supplies across the country were in high demand. Schools will not operate in a face-to-face situation if safety supplies are not available.

**What and who will ensure that our classrooms, hallways, chairs, tables, doorknobs, and bathrooms be cleaned and sanitized? Will lids be added to toilets? Paper towels instead of the moldy air dryers that just blow germs all over the room?**

The building is disinfected each evening with a product considered safe and non-toxic, while also being proactive in eradicating evidence of the virus. Additionally, hand sanitizing will be available at entry/exit points, and within all classrooms. Within the restrooms, the hand blow dryers have been turned off and instead there are no-touch paper towel dispensers.

Additionally, tissue grabs are available outside of each restroom so that no-touch entry is available for students; tissue grabs can then be deposited in a trash receptacle outside the bathroom door. There are also 13 temporary custodial positions being hired to assist with vigilant disinfecting throughout the day.

**How will using the bathroom work? Even if kids are in their own groups won't multiple groups have to share the same bathroom?**

Within the restrooms are no-touch paper towel dispensers. Additionally, tissue grabs are available outside of each restroom so that no-touch entry is available for students; tissue grabs

can then be deposited in a trash receptacle outside the bathroom door. Multiple fixture restrooms will have “Social Distancing” signage over every other fixture (sinks, toilets) and on every other stall. All fixtures will still be cleaned/disinfected daily.

Restroom availability is different with each level: elementary, middle, and high school. Restrooms will be assigned for cohorts in terms of using the facility closest to the cohort’s classrooms. GHS does not have cohorting, so social distancing will be strictly enforced with high levels of disinfecting throughout the day.

**What can we do if we don’t feel our classrooms are being cleaned well enough? How can we ensure our custodial staff is disinfecting our desks, chairs and other surfaces?**

The Facilities Director should be notified through the school’s administration.

**What is the protection plan/protocol with safety measures for - sanitizing of facilities (cleaning and UV light sanitization)?**

Buildings will be disinfected each evening, and cleaning will occur throughout the day. UV light sanitation will not be in place given the high volume of square footage and inability to install adequate systems across PK-12+. Additionally, we have recently added products, produced with our Viking equipment, to our cleaning and disinfecting line (PureClean (a sodium hydroxide solution) is used for cleaning and degreasing and PureSan (a hypochloris acid solution) is used for disinfecting). Detailed information about our additional cleaning products can be found on our [GPS Return to School Planning page under Resources](#).

**What is the protection plan/protocol with safety measures? Are you making appropriate considerations with: PPE with masks, gloves, hand washing schedules throughout the school day, plexiglass/acrylic screens for every student/faculty desks?**

Yes, GPS has ordered adequate masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer. Screens/clear dividers on desks are being applied where needed depending on social distancing needs and unique spaces.

**Will the classroom teacher be responsible for disinfecting parts of our classroom between cohorts of students? What about after lunch (especially for students with food allergies)?**

No, cohorting is to assist with keeping like students together. Intense cleaning and disinfecting happens each evening by the custodial staff. Although chemicals are safe and non-toxic, we do not want the disinfectant being sprayed constantly where our students are sitting, breathing, and learning. This level of cleaning in between every class would be excessive and cause possible build up of the product on desks and other surfaces.

**If a teacher passes out books to students, will they wear gloves? When students return books, will teachers quarantine the books for a certain amount of time?**

Currently, the [most recent research](#), which the AASL uses as a guideline along with CDC recommendations, says 4 days is the quarantine time needed. The Library Media department is looking at how to safely circulate materials given this new information. (BH)

## Curriculum and Learning

**For our youngest kids -- will they still be able to work in centers and groups (since they will be in their cohorts)? Or will they need to stay 6 feet apart in their classrooms?**

The social distancing expectation is 3 feet given that all students and staff are wearing masks. There will be some centers and groups which can occur with safe practices, including clear dividers.

**If my child is in the ALP program for one area but not all, how would that work if he is in the cohort with the ALP teacher? Will he also be in a homeroom for his other subjects?**

All students in grades three through five who have been placed in ALP Reading, Math and/or Science will be in the ALP cohort for all Humanities, Math and Science instruction. They will still be assigned a homeroom teacher for ancillary activities.

**What is the assessment plan? How will Star be used?**

The goal is for teachers to use LinkIt assessments. For example, a new fourth grade student would be assessed on all skills expected at the end of third grade. The teacher can then identify quickly any areas that need to be addressed. STAR remains GPS's Universal Screener for reading and math and will be administered three times per year as required for tiered support.

**Can teachers be encouraged to assign additional work, optional if need be, to steer kids to should they have unexpected downtime?**

Parents should always feel comfortable speaking to their child's teacher about unique circumstances such as these. It is not uncommon for a teacher to provide additional, or varied, assignments to individual students.

**Will there be advance notice if school moves to a different phase of learning?**

Unfortunately, advance notice is not likely because a change in phase is directly linked to a COVID outbreak or positive cases. Immediate attention must be given to mitigate the spread, which also warrants a change to hybrid or full remote. Depending on the transmission risk, the district may be able to allow a 1 or 2 day transition (like snow days). However, in this scenario the health department would still not allow GPS staff to re-enter the buildings.

## Eastern Middle School

**EMS is as overcrowded as GHS which is tentatively scheduled to return under a Moderate Transmission Risk. Why isn't EMS considered a Moderate Transmission Risk, too?**

Given that EMS is a middle school, the schedule operates much differently. Cohorting is available for middle school teams, whereas GHS cannot cohort given the complexity of the schedule. In addition, EMS has larger classroom square footage which assists with the social distancing aspect. EMS will also be utilizing some spaces differently in order to spread groups out, such as the cafeteria and media center.

**If EMS is expected to return at full capacity, how is a teacher expected to socially distance 30 students in a classroom, when to fit all these students they need to be shoulder to shoulder 3 to a table?**

Our guidance from the State has said that social distancing in the classroom should be between 3-6 feet, which is what the District will be planning for to ensure health and safety protocols are followed for our teachers and students. We will not have classrooms with 30 students.

**Many teachers at EMS share classrooms and have to travel to 5 different classes daily. Since those classrooms will not be in the particular teacher's cohort, how will the teacher's health be protected teaching room to room?**

Middle school principals are working to minimize the amount of movement in and around the buildings. The elective schedules will look different to keep specific staff with one cohort for 6-9 weeks instead of the usual schedule which creates a higher probability of cross contamination. For those few staff who move more often, such as small group reading, there will be an extra layer of clear divider and more regular disinfecting to assist the teacher and students in providing a safe environment.

**How do you plan to address the state suggestion to keep students in smaller cohorts to minimize spreading at EMS, since cohorts weren't possible in the past due to leveling classes (Advanced classes, ALP, etc)?**

Guidelines from the State shared that cohorts can be 50 - 100 students, which is the approximate size of a middle school team. Schedules are also being modified and will look slightly different from the non-COVID environment.

## **Extracurriculars**

**After school program opening, if schools will open in a fall?**

Before and after school care may operate usual times with social distancing if we are in the Low Transmission Risk phase.

**Is there a plan in place for extra curricular activities or are they canceled?**

CIAC is the governing body for high school athletics and activities. Currently, they are planning a full return. However, GPS expects to see modifications to this current stance in the coming weeks. This issue is being monitored on a daily basis. Middle School will begin the year with no after school activities for at least the first month in order to assess the health and safety management risks to students and staff.

**Will fall sports still take place? Won't there be a larger risk with kids sweating and vomiting? If they do, will meets/games happen?**

The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference is the governing body for all Fall sports and competitive athletics programs. We will be monitoring their decisions and protocols and will share with our students and their families. While they are planning a full return, GPS expects to see modifications to their approach.

## Facilities

### **What is the protection plan/protocol with safety measures?**

GPS has posted for 13 temporary custodial positions to add a greater level of disinfecting capability throughout the school day. In addition, floor mapping for social distancing and directionality will be provided for each school site. Multiple points of entry and exit will be utilized to mitigate the number of people utilizing specific spaces. A full list of our safety protocols can be found in our [Return to School Planning document](#), which was shared with the CSDE on July 24, 2020.

### **Are you making appropriate considerations with enforcing social distanced learning (more classrooms, more teachers)?**

Yes, GPS is modifying the schedule to adapt for social distancing between 3-6 feet. Additional staff are being added in K-5 to assist with the grouping numbers during the day. Class sizes are being limited through a more balanced schedule in middle school by adapting the way electives are programmed.

### **Are you making appropriate considerations with: outdoor learning environments where possible? Can we rent or buy tents for the school green space areas for extra classroom space during nice weather?**

Principals will encourage outdoor activities and learning when possible. Consideration must be given to heat alerts, stormy weather, availability for the full school to have equal access to outside learning, recess schedules and masks breaks. In a district the size of GPS, it is not a strategy to count on for daily use for all students, but it will be a strategy utilized to help principals provide scheduled and increased time for outdoor activities.

### **What will be done about teachers that do not have windows or cannot open their windows? Will there be communication that students should wear layers and take allergy medicine prior to coming to school?**

Each building and classroom is unique and must be evaluated based on what is in a particular setting. The important aspect is reinforcing the wearing of a mask.

### **How will students using their locker be handled? Will we have to stagger dismissals and take away from instructional time to maintain social distance?**

Yes, there will be some loss of instructional time to stagger entry and exit times. We will share additional information and details on lockers for middle school and high school once finalized.

### **Where will plexiglass be utilized outside of the main office? At teacher's desks? Between students at a table?**

Main offices, Nurses' offices, GHS House Offices, and essential related face-to-face service provider spaces are equipped with a clear divider. Clear dividers will also be available for related service providers in every building as well as for staff working with certain students in a 1:1 setting.

**How are we going to maintain social distance between students during passing time?**

There will be directional signage on the floors to give guidance to students and teachers on necessary spacing and general movement around the building.

**If the CDC and the world says 6 feet distance, why does GPS think it's cool to do 2-3 feet?**

GPS is following the guidance set forth by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). Their guidance states that classrooms should strive for between 3-6 feet of social distance. This spacing is also approved by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

## **Greenwich High School**

**How are you addressing the use of the student center at GHS? Will students be expected to go to their classes and then leave campus?**

The student center will be closed in the morning. Students will go directly to class when they arrive at school. We are exploring using the student center for instruction, teacher prep time, teacher work groups, etc. Students may utilize the student center during opens; however, the number of students allowed will be limited within the student center and at the tables. Social distancing will be followed. At lunch time, only two sections will be opened on opposite ends of the student center. Only a certain number of students will be allowed at a table. If students have the first or last block open, they can come in late or leave early if they have transportation.

**Where will GHS students eat lunch? Has Greenwich High School explored ways to allow the students to eat lunch outdoors?**

Students can eat in the student center. There will be two sections open per lunch wave so that the others can be cleaned and to assure social distancing. In addition, students always have the option to eat outside. We will have additional chairs and tables outside for students.

**Will students at GHS have to fill out and bring the signed Covid-19 daily checklist every day before being admitted to the school? Who will collect these forms each day?**

No, students are not being asked to bring the form to school. Families and staff PK-12+ will be asked to conduct the daily check and self monitor.

**At GHS, if a family has multiple children attending, will there be an accomodation to have both attend on the same days?**

Yes, families will attend by alphabet if a Hybrid model is utilized, and the alphabet will be applied PK-12+ as needed so that families with children on multiple schedules maintain a set schedule.

**Can 9th and 10th grade students be kept in the same class with the same kids (like pods) for most of the day (to eliminate so many kids in the halls)?**

GHS will do their best to mitigate students crossing large groups, but given the nature of courses offered it is not possible to meet scheduling demands for all students and provide a

small cohort of students. The multitude of courses, we offer including the number of sections, make it impossible to keep 9th and 10th graders with the same students.

**How will GHS students handle their complex schedules in a hybrid model? Will some coursework options be compromised? How about music and drama electives?**

There will be some changes to the elective schedules, especially in areas such as chorus and band which are high risk activities due to the amount of air which is projected from the student during these activities. GPS continues to refine and analyze which electives may see greater impacts based on the current re-entry status, COVID spikes, and maintaining social distancing and cohorting as much as possible.

**Are you going to make any attempt to group GHS students into cohorts where a group of students share the same classes?**

GHS will do their best to mitigate students crossing large groups, but given the nature of courses offered it is not possible to meet scheduling demands for all students and provide a small cohort of students.

**What will Grade 9 Orientation at GHS be like? Will orientation include an assembly in the PAC, club fair and lunch in the cafeteria? Will you divide the students into two groups that come at different times? How will you ensure that 9th grade students are properly oriented to the high school?**

Our plan is to split the 9th grade class into two groups where one group will come in the morning and the other in the afternoon. We hope to have an assembly in the PAC for each group of students where social distancing is followed. We are hoping to have a virtual club fair or a video orientation. We are not serving lunch. The day is still in the development stages.

**At GHS, you say class sizes will be smaller because 50% of students will be there at a time. How does this actually work?**

Currently, the CSDE is requiring that all Districts plan for a full return to school. However, our preference is to take a hybrid approach with the high school which would look like the following; we will continue this planning while we keep conversations going with the State. We will split the students into two groups by alphabetical order. Each cohort will come on different days. An analysis will be done to assure that after the alphabetical split the numbers in classes are such where social distancing can still be maintained.

**At GHS, will the English Language Learners be going for in-person instruction more often than the other students? If so, how will that work?**

Our subcommittee is working on a plan for unique learners, including English Language Learners.

**Will teachers at GHS have 2 sections of each class? Will those staying home on alternative days participate via Web? Or will they teach the subject twice, ie on both days the students are present. Will you use any form of flip learning?**

Teachers will not have two sections of each class. Students who are home will live stream into the class that is occurring in the building.

**Would it make more sense to just alternate in-school days with remote learning days for GHS, meaning one day in school and the next day home?**

Students coming for two days, with a day in between, then the alternate group of students coming for two days, allows for more time to deep clean between the cohorts.

**If a family chooses distance learning for their GHS student will that be referenced on their transcript?**

If a family chooses to pursue Remote Learning this will not be referenced on the transcript.

**Will the students receive their schedules earlier so they can work out problems via email or phone with their guidance counselors?**

Our traditional practices will not be impacted. Students will have access to their schedule in Aspen a day or two before school starts as usual, and in addition students will have the first cycle of the school year to work with their school counselor if their schedule needs to be changed.

**Where will the students at GHS be allowed to go during their opens? Will they be allowed to sit in the Student Center?**

Students will be allowed to sit in the student center and media center during their opens. Social distancing will be practiced. Students can also go outside when the weather allows.

**What will hallway transitions be like at GHS?**

We are working with the Director of Safety and Security to place hallway markers to direct student traffic in the hallways. We are also exploring using additional passageways to get to different parts of the building.

**Will all the seniors who want parking passes be granted parking passes for the entire year? Will any juniors be given parking passes?**

At this point all seniors can drive to school if we are in a hybrid model, if we come back full time we will have a lottery for parking. Juniors will not be given parking passes.

**What can we do to create social learning opportunities for students should we need to go back to remote learning?**

Extracurricular activities will continue in the remote learning environment. We are adding an SEL block at the end of the day as an additional social learning opportunity.

## **Lunch & Food Services**

**Where will students eat their lunch? What will that look like, including removal of masks?**

The elementary students will generally be eating in their classrooms. They will be socially distanced. Secondary students will be eating in the cafeteria, practicing social distancing.

**If we will be eating in the classrooms will we be getting larger trash and recycling bins for our classrooms?**

No, we will not be adding larger trash cans since the number of students eating is minimal, and the waste will only be the brown bag lunches or the minimal waste from students who bring their lunches. We do need to encourage student recycling and those who bring lunch from home should keep the plastic bags for sandwiches and snacks in their lunch box to be returned home for their family to reuse or recycle in their home environment.

**In order to obtain that 6 ft spacing will we be splitting classes into multiple rooms to eat lunch? How would this even be possible without room sharing? Also, OSHA rules state that you can not have students eating in a science classroom.**

Elementary students will eat most of their lunches in the classroom, and middle school will eat most of their lunches in the cafeteria. We are not splitting classes into multiple rooms, and students will not eat in science classrooms.

**Why would the kids be only 3 feet apart when eating inside (the time when they have no masks on)? Shouldn't that be the time they socially distance at 6 feet?**

They will be socially distanced at 6-feet for lunch, or additional safety mechanisms such as clear dividers, will be utilized for 3-foot spacing.

**How will you deal with kids eating in the classroom and those with airborne anaphylactic food allergies?**

This does not change from being in a cafeteria. Staff will need to be cognizant of any allergies in a classroom setting and make sure that all safety mechanisms are in place.

**How will it be decided which teachers will be doing lunch duty, thereby exposing them to much higher levels of students?**

Teachers will have lunch with their classroom in terms of being physically present for PK-5. Teacher lunch will be provided at a different time. In secondary, lunch duty will be done by those administrative and lead positions which are in broad contact in and around the building on a daily basis.

## **Masks**

**Currently, what will mask-wearing procedures look like?**

Currently, the CSDE is requiring that masks be worn while inside the school building and while riding the bus. Mask breaks will be provided throughout the day and those opportunities will be instructed by teachers.

**Is a shield allowed instead of a mask? Can clear face shields be purchased for the adults who will be exposed to children who are not showing overt COVID symptoms but are doing the usual coughing and sneezing?**

A mask is required even with a face shield. However, a teacher who also wants the additional protection of a shield will have that made available for them.

**Will GPS masks, face shields, and hand sanitizer be provided to all students and staff? If so, will my child get a new mask everyday as they enter the building?**

GPS will have masks available if students or teachers happen to forget their mask. It is expected that families and teachers will be using their own masks. This strategy is helpful for students to recognize his/her mask and mitigate students getting masks mixed up with one another. If a family needs assistance in acquiring a mask for their child the district will provide one for them. Hand sanitizers will be in all buildings and classrooms.

**How are you mandating mask-wearing for those that can, including at school and on the bus? How will teachers teach while monitoring kids to keep social distance, not touch their faces and keep masks on properly?**

Yes, masks are mandated for those that can per requirements from the CSDE. If students are willfully not adhering to health and safety protocols, they will be referred to their school administration, similar to any other behavior infraction. The District is obligated under the law to enforce the wearing of masks as a health and safety risk.

**The Return to School Planning Committee has said that kids with medical conditions or anxiety can opt not to wear masks, will a doctor's note be required for that?**

Yes, students may opt not to wear a mask with a medical reason from their doctor.

**Will there be an option of removing masks while sitting at desks and socially distanced? Or is there another plan to give them mask free breaks? And where are masks stored during mask breaks?**

There will be mask breaks as designated by a teacher or member of administration.

**Have you seen the video floating around the internet of the child with a lanyard attached to his mask? Is this a possible strategy to utilize for students needing to take them off and on at recess time without having to throw them on the ground or trying to find a container that does not contain plastic?**

Yes, most of the lanyard videos do have the mask being placed in a plastic bag, which would not be acceptable via health guidelines. GPS is exploring the best storage mechanism for when the mask is removed for a "mask break."

**Will there be time built into the school day that teachers can escort children outside so as to air out the classroom and give students fresh air?**

Yes, the fresh air breaks will be scheduled and routine.

**What protocols will be in place to help these children who are really still a bit too young to fully understand all the implications of what is going on [with wearing masks]?**

The district will include topics related to the impact of the pandemic with age appropriate instructional resources and strategies in the SEL/Mental Health Plan.

**How will the district protect staff and students from an unmasked child who may be an asymptomatic carrier? Would that child be tested weekly, perhaps? If 1 kids gets a letter saying they cannot wear a mask because of sensory or sensitive reasons, all parents will be going to the doctor to get a letter for their child saying they can't wear a mask for sensitive/sensory reasons. How are you going to deal with that?**

GPS will need to determine the magnitude of this challenge, and then problem-solve to adjust. Testing weekly would be at the will of the parent or guardian, and many families may not have the health insurance to do so, or be willing to subject their child (with high anxiety and/or other issues) to ongoing testing.

**If the schools put all the health and safety protocols in place for distancing in the school buildings, won't those effects be negated when students are hanging out on their own, outside of school?**

The school can only control what happens within our walls, and to mitigate a large portion of the students' day can make a difference. Community partnership is critical for a return to school, including wearing masks at non-school events and sporting events, and minimizing contact with large gatherings deemed not safe by the health officials.

**Will teachers be provided with “see-through” masks so that young children and hard of hearing students can see a speaker’s mouth?**

Yes, students that need to be able to see their teacher’s mouth will be able to do so.

**Will preschool children be required to wear masks?**

Yes, currently Connecticut mandates masks for all learners. Overseas, it has been proven that preschool children can wear masks quite comfortably if mask wearing is approached as a positive experience. Certainly, there are always exceptions for students of all ages and stages who will have a difficult time.

## **Quarantine**

**What is the protocol for a positive test in either a student or a teacher? (Does the whole school close? Just the cohort stays home? Entire bus stay home? For how long? Etc...)**

A positive test would require a 14 day quarantine, for anyone exposed. The local health department, the nursing supervisor and the medical advisor will determine the extent of exposure and initiate the contact tracing.

**How will families let the District know when they test positive? Do we all get notified who is infected and when? Or because of HIPAA regulations are parents and teachers just going to get mysterious “may have been in contact” emails all year long?**

The local health department is notified of every positive test in the community. We have also asked parents to notify us and we will work with the Department of Health to do the contact tracing. Health alerts of exposure will be sent when necessary.

**If a child is exhibiting symptoms, is there a quarantine location for them so as to reduce exposure and transmission to the rest of the grade/ class/ building?**

There will be an identified isolation space in every building where students can remain safely and separately until they are picked up by their parent/guardian.

**If a student starts showing symptoms of illness, let's say fever. How is that handled? For instance, is it required for them to see their doctor, get tested, quarantine?**

If symptoms develop during the day a student is isolated, excluded, and parents are asked to have the child seen by their health care provider. They will need a note from their doctor in order to return to school.

**If a kid or teacher has a positive test would it be required that they have a negative test before returning?**

Testing is one strategy used for return to school, symptom strategy is another, the family's health care provider will determine the strategy used and document when that child may return to school.

**Are you going to require staff and families to tell you where they were the 2 weeks before school started, or are you just going to trust that people follow quarantine rules? Can we have families sign something attesting that they did not just return from a quarantine state?**

Currently, the State of Connecticut has mandated quarantine rules for residents who travel from certain areas. The School District will remain in compliance with what the State of CT mandates.

**How are you handling people traveling in and out of the country or "hot spot" states and the children that live in those households?**

Currently, the State of Connecticut has mandated quarantine rules for residents who travel from certain areas. The School District will remain in compliance with what the State of CT mandates.

**When students or faculty members don't follow quarantine directions after traveling, who do we report it to?**

Currently, the State of Connecticut has mandated quarantine rules for residents who travel from certain areas. The School District will remain in compliance with what the State of CT mandates. Similar to other behavioral infractions that people may witness, you can report these incidents to school administration.

**If a teacher has an exposure (like from a spouse or own child), and has to quarantine, will they teach remotely while their students remain in the building?**

A leave of absence is an extended period of time off excused by the employer. A teacher is not required to work during this time.

**How will the schools handle testing for Covid? Many asymptomatic people are testing positive. Leaving it in the hands of parents isn't "safe". Many parents can't/won't get**

**their child tested because it isn't convenient for them due to long lines and/or testing locations.**

The District does not handle testing. Families will need to contact their own medical provider.

## **Remote Learning**

**Will parents have a choice to keep digital learning at home for their children when school opens?**

Yes, the district will be reaching out to all families in the very near future to ask for your commitment to either return to school "live" or if you are choosing to go "remote."

**Why are we not instituting remote learning only until there is a safe vaccine for all?**

The Governor's direction to all districts in the state is to have all students return to school in the Fall.

**How will we maintain consistency between what is being taught in "remote learning" and in school?**

The same curriculum is taught in either scenario. If a student should need to transition into or out of remote learning, there would be a conversation between a 'sending teacher' and a 'receiving teacher' so that instruction can continue with minimal disruption.

**How easily will students be able to transition from an in-school model to virtual model (and vice versa) during the school year?**

The parent would simply notify the school of their intent to return and then there will be a two-week hold before the child could transition to ensure all scheduling and logistical considerations are completed for a smooth transition.

**Can I choose a part-time/hybrid model for my students?**

At the elementary and middle schools, there is not a part-time hybrid model being offered. Currently at the high school level, students will be in a full-time hybrid model which will be explained in further detail by the Greenwich High School staff but will consist of an A and B rotation in and out of school.

**Will there be online teaching (live classes) and live interaction with students? If so, will there be a minimum number of required live hours?**

Yes, there will be live classes and pre-recorded assignments/activities as well. We are striving for a balance of 50/50 synchronous and asynchronous learning.

**Who will be responsible for distance learning at the Elementary level? Classroom teacher or a designated distance learning teacher?**

If a parent elects to have their child in a remote learning classroom to start the year, the child will be assigned a remote learning teacher from the district.

**Will there be any consideration for having the elementary students possibly starting remote learning with last year's teacher to ensure students already feel connected to their teacher?**

Not at this time.

**Will there be a more consistent platform of digital tools for students?**

Yes. In reviewing usage data from the spring coupled with feedback from several teacher and parent user groups, we have compiled a list of digital tools that will be leveraged for daily use at each level.

**Are there any social components in remote learning in which my child might still participate?**

If your child is in remote learning, the remote learning teacher will develop opportunities for social interaction with other students assigned to that particular class ie. morning meeting, read aloud, district norm activities etc.

**If distance learning is implemented, could a teacher conduct lessons from the empty classroom in the school building (as opposed to at home)?**

It is possible but it depends on the health guidelines at the time.

**Why not start school remotely and ask families to be really responsible about distancing so after two weeks we can be more confident we are sending healthy individuals back to buildings?**

The Governor is requiring all districts to develop a plan for all students to return to their buildings for live instruction.

**Will GPS make an exception and allow incoming Kindergarteners to repeat in 2021-2022 if parents feel as though they need the repeat year (if they fall behind with remote learning)?**

This would need to be determined on a case by case basis. Concerned parents should reach out to their building administrators for this discussion and any necessary next steps.

**Will teachers who are teaching Remote Learning School be teaching students from multiple schools?**

Yes, it is very likely that teachers would be teaching students from multiple schools.

## **Return to School Planning**

**How can I participate in the Panorama back to school survey for all my children who attend Greenwich schools?**

The District shared an initial survey in mid-July to gauge our families' comfort levels with returning to school, in addition to other logistical considerations including transportation. We appreciate all of the feedback and suggestions that were shared. The District will also be

sharing an online form to formally ask families to enroll in Remote Learning should they be interested in pursuing that option.

**How would it be safe for all these kids and teachers to return to school when it's not safe enough for these meetings to be held in person?**

It's about social distancing and cohort sizes. There are meetings taking place in person, but the Board of Education would not be able to accommodate the 200-500 people who have been in attendance virtually. The GPS offices are going through entry during the weeks of July 20-31st, and it is likely that the BOE meetings will follow suit when schools return if live streaming can still be available for the larger community. Live streaming via Zoom has afforded the community much greater access than before, and meeting attendance and engagement has been stronger than ever. The approach is allowing maximum community participation while eliminating risk for staff, BOE, and the larger community.

**How did you select teachers for your focus groups?**

Administrators submitted names and several teachers emailed the Deputy Superintendent and asked to be invited to the focus group.

**Why isn't Carol Sutton, or some other teacher representative, on the Return to School Planning Committee?**

Currently, our Return to School Planning Team is composed of District administrators and our Medical Consultant, Dr. Katy Noble. However, the Return to School Planning Team has held numerous focus groups, shared surveys and will hold Town Hall sessions to gather input from a large number of our families to ensure we are taking in all of the perspectives from our families and staff members.

Our goal was not to have any 2-3 people represent the views of a group of almost 900 teachers or 1,200 staff. The goal was to take multiple inputs from the entire community so that we know our inputs are broad, representative, and truly reflect the vast opinions which exist in regards to reopening of schools.

**What is this committee's position on the purpose of school? Is it to provide education (which distance learning does) or is it to help parents get back to their lives and jobs?**

It is not the choice of the committee to provide remote learning or return to school. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and Governor have mandated a return to school and not remote learning. GPS is requesting that the CSDE consider GHS for approval to provide a hybrid schedule due to the sheer volume of students and staff in an overcrowded space. However, as of July 21st, the CSDE has been unwavering and is mandating a full return.

The purpose of school is multi-dimensional, and to take care and nurture the development of the whole child. Certainly, the educational content aspect is critical to our purpose and mission, but so is the social emotional and health of our students. Many families depend on the stability, nurturing, and support of the public school system. We have emotional supports in our schools (counselors, social workers, psychologists...) because we care about the whole child. Helping

parents return to work and provide for their families should absolutely be part of our mission so that we can partner in making sure that families are healthy and children have the support that they need academically, socially and emotionally. This follows the concept of Maslow over Blooms.... Caring before content.

**Has there been consideration to bring students back to school in the same way the state of Connecticut is opening up in phases?**

Currently, the CSDE will not allow a phased opening for schools. They have mandated a full return.

## **Safety and Security**

**How do you plan to address students who will not comply with the safety recommendations?**

Students will be referred to administration for disciplinary measures similar to other behavior infractions.

**What measures are going to be taken to make the schools as secure as before with the staggered arrivals and increased entry points?**

The entry and exit will need to be monitored by adults in the buildings. Doors will be promptly secured once the entry and/or exit procedure concludes. Staff will assist in checking doors and making sure that all exits are secured.

## **School Scheduling**

**Can a hybrid approach with less students in the building and a shorter day be considered?**

Currently, the CSDE is requiring that all District's plan for a full return to school with students attending classes five full days per week. Should our health status change this may be adjusted or updated.

**Can we coordinate siblings in the school system with similar schedules?**

The District's plan for hybrid schedules is likely to be done alphabetically to help families plan for their students to attend in-person classes on the same days.

**Can we start school a few weeks early to try to get in as much classroom time as possible before the winter months and a possibility of a second outbreak wave?**

Currently, the Board of Education has voted to begin school on Tuesday, September 8th to allow for three full days of Professional Development for our staff to ensure they are equipped to begin the school year, both instructionally and from a health and safety protocol standpoint.

**Can you create a tiered return so that we are all back to full time by November so both students and parents can return to a more normalized schedule?**

Currently, the CSDE is requiring that all District's plan for a full return to school with students attending classes five full days per week. Should our health status change this may be adjusted or updated. November will be greatly determined by COVID outbreaks and what is happening in Connecticut and Fairfield County.

**How will cohorting work with students, including multi-grade classes and specials?**

Schedules are being modified to minimize cross-grade groupings. Electives are being scheduled differently to minimize teachers who move across all grades.

**How will elementary cohorts be formed to ensure children are with good friends for lunch and recess?**

At the elementary level the students' will cohort by homeroom unless there are 4 sections of a grade then two classes will be identified as a cohort with a target number of no more than 50 people as prescribed by the state reopening guidelines. At the middle school, the cohort will not exceed by approximately 100 students and the plan is to cohort by team.

**How will classroom sharing work, including sharing materials/computers among teachers?**

The goal is for everyone to have their own materials and for any shared materials to be cleaned with great frequency.

**If there are smaller class sizes in one building as compared to another, is the district considering shifting students to that building to even out class sizes?**

No, every attempt is being made to keep all class sizes on the lower end of the guidelines.

**How will we have adequate social distancing in classrooms?**

We are developing room design patterns for building administrators to follow that instruct how to set up desks and tables to maintain required social distancing spacing.

## **Social and Emotional Learning**

**What is this stress going to do to our teachers? How will you be handling their social emotional needs?**

The Social Emotional Learning (SEL)/Mental Health Plan for the district will include attention to the needs of staff and students. Additionally, staff have access to the Employee Assistance Program if they feel that they are significantly impacted by the pandemic.

**How will the team consider the significant mental health implications for students, teachers and families? How can we prepare teachers to have these difficult discussions with students? How can we balance social-emotional health with education?**

The SEL/Mental Health Plan for the district will include attention to the needs of staff and students. The plan includes recommendations for universal screening tools, general strategies and instruction for all students and suggestions for students who are experiencing difficulties. A thorough Social Emotional support will be outlined for staff and students in the next few weeks.

## **Special Education**

**How will teaching children with learning differences be handled? Who will be leading that and will they be using other school districts that have been successful in such? Will these students be going back to school fully?**

All students with support needs (special education, ALP, Section 504, ESL) will receive services although the format may not look exactly as it did pre-pandemic. The first consideration will be safety and following the guidelines from the State. All students will have the option to attend school on the same schedule as their classmates without support needs. Individual arrangements will be made for students with the most unique learning needs. All Connecticut district staff have been meeting and sharing their plans and strategies, given the strict guidelines for returning to school, there is not much variation in the way in which districts are planning to return.

**How can accommodations be put in place for hearing impaired students who depend upon lip reading in order to interpret language? Will masks with transparent mouth areas be readily available? Also, how can mask wearing and FM utilizing be compatible? Has this been addressed for ELLs as well?**

We ordered and used a variety of masks during the summer program including shields and masks with plastic inserts (so you can see the mouth). There are some articles saying that masks can degrade some high-frequency sounds (IE: s, sh) which can affect comprehension of speech, but it will amplify as best as possible. Coupling the FM with a face shield or clear mask for the visual cues will help with better speech comprehension. Our FM systems are some of the best on the market, so they will provide adequate access given the unusual circumstances.

## **Teachers and Personnel**

**Why isn't the health and safety of the entire GPS staff a higher priority then returning to school before it is safe to do so?**

This question is best asked to the Commissioner of Education and the Governor.

GPS understands the confusion between science experts, health and safety guidance, and the full reopening plans for schools which often seem in contradiction of one another.

The Connecticut State Department Education (CSDE) and Governor have mandated that all CT schools must plan for a full time return to schools. They have been clear in their guidance that no hybrid schedules will meet compliance. GPS is trying to work with the CSDE on a hybrid for return for GHS where cohorting and social distancing is not adequate to meet the CDC decision tree for opening. However, as of July 21st, the CSDE has been unwilling to adjust.

Health and safety is a priority for all. Every district must put a plan in place to reopen schools. The district will provide training to all members of GPS to ensure that safety measures remain in place, and everyone is well educated.

**What should a teacher do if her children's school district closes but GPS does not? How are teachers, who would be expected to work 5 days a week, handle their own children only being in school part time?**

If teachers do not have any other options to address care for children in schools that are closed they may request a leave and should reach out to Human Resources. Teachers have options under the Family First Coronavirus Response Act and the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

**Will my sick days be impacted if I contract Covid? Will I be expected to teach remotely if I am home being quarantined and/or sick?**

Employees that contract COVID are entitled to two weeks or 80 hours of paid leave. If the leave should extend beyond two weeks, then the employee would utilize their sick leave just as if they would during flu season. Employees are not required to work when they are on an approved leave of absence.

**What is the process for a teacher, that is a "high risk" category to stay out and still get paid?**

HR is currently in the process of scheduling meetings to address such issues. If an employee is of high risk they can request accommodations. The accommodations will determine how an employee completes the functions of their job if they are approved. This will vary on a case-by-case basis. A survey which includes the plans to return will be shared with GPS staff. This will inform meetings with HR to address the various needs of teachers considered high risk.

**Can the district be held financially and legally responsible if a teacher and/or student gets Covid due to returning to school?**

No. The district is complying with a state order to open schools.

**How are you determining a building's staffing? What happens if say, 25% of the teachers in a building, refuse to show up?**

Surveys that include the letter of intent will be shared with GPS on Friday, with a submission deadline of August 7th. This information will be balanced with the family surveys to determine staffing in buildings. Refusing to show up is a different scenario than presenting with a medical need, and it would be considered job abandonment, so we encourage staff to work closely with Human Resources.

**Who determines what teachers are on site and what teachers can teach remotely?**

HR will compile a list, prioritizing teachers that can only work remotely, followed by teachers that request this.

**How would you suggest a teacher teach an in-person class and social distance at the same time?**

Teaching will need to look different, and the teacher may need to stay in the front of the room in his or her "safe zone" which maintains 6' distancing. Although, 3' is considered adequate if the masks are enforced.

**How are you going to handle teachers that move from classroom to classroom?**

GPS is working to minimize this as much as possible. However, there are some positions which will be essential and it will broaden the cohort.

**Will all staff and department meetings be done over Zoom/GMeet to limit teacher exposure?**

Many of the large scale meetings will remain over Zoom/Meets to mitigate risk.

**Will staff receive training before the beginning of the school year that covers signs and symptoms of COVID-19, Standard Public Health protocols, Hygiene Practices, PPE, Reporting Illnesses?**

Yes, the planning is currently in progress.

**Can teacher attire be altered to maximize health and safety for students and staff (for example, scrubs that can be washed easily)?**

We do not have a policy to suggest they could not.

**What about supplies? If we can't read books or do science experiments or play sports, why are we back?**

We are back in school because the CSDE and Governor have ordered schools to do so. However, books can be read and science experiments can be done. It's the disinfecting which will become important, and teachers may need to rethink how they group students and how materials are utilized.

## **Technology**

**When will we know what digital tools we will have available to us for the 2020-2021 school year? Are there specific tools that have been discussed in the focus groups that the district is looking on purchasing/spending money on?**

The digital toolbox and all appropriate licensing for these tools are in the process of being reviewed, vetted and purchased. The website will be updated with a comprehensive list prior to the start of the school year.

**What is the plan for returning devices?**

Grade 6 and grade 9 students will be returning their devices on their orientation day as in the past.

## **Transportation**

**How will busing work? Especially in buses that have 50-70 assigned students? How will you social distance?**

Parents are being asked to drive their students unless utilizing the bus service is essential.

**How can you assign students to a cohort and then mix them together on the busses?**

Cohorting is about minimizing risk. Students have numerous cohorts from youth sports, church youth groups, extended family cohorts, and youth activities such as Girl Scouts. The school environment can only minimize the likelihood of greater contact. GPS is working to minimize the bus situation.

**Will we be extending the drop off and pick up time for students and starting the school day later and ending earlier to accommodate for social distancing and more parents driving students to school?**

Not in terms of the bus times. It will be the car drop offs which will be adjusted.

**Will students be assigned a seat so they know? How will we minimize students standing together at dismissal time to maintain this requirement?**

The State guidance is the first student on the bus goes to the back of the bus and as students get on, they go to the back and fill in the seats until the bus is filled. Siblings may sit together.

## **Ventilation**

**How is ventilation in classrooms being improved?**

Ventilation can't be improved for all classrooms across the district. Each building is different, and some have newer construction, windows that open, and some have no windows that open and window units. Each building must be considered on an individual basis.

**Will documentation be made public so staff and families know the classrooms are adequately ventilated?**

After asking direct questions about their particular school site, if families have great concerns about classroom ventilation, they may want to consider full remote learning. Ventilation is limited by the units which are available in the building and the facility.

**Will window AC units be cleaned and sanitized?**

Yes, window AC units are cleaned on a regular basis and filters are changed.

## **Virus Considerations**

**What is the protection plan/protocol with safety measures, including staff and student training?**

Masks are mandatory inside the school building, social distancing will be maintained, floor directional signage will be placed within the buildings, clear dividers will be used in spaces that are unable to be socially distanced. There is a full list of safety protocols included in the [Return to School Planning](#) document that was submitted to the CSDE on July 24, 2020.

**If schools are not taking temperature measurements, and the parent checklist is a self checklist, how will schools monitor the wellbeing of both students and teachers? Many parents have not kept kids home for flu, and certainly not for the requisite 14 days, how will this be any different?**

There is no foolproof checklist approach. Parents who give motrin to a child an hour before coming to school would still exhibit a temperature within normal ranges. We must work together for all staff and families to understand the magnitude of sending children to school sick, or staff coming to school sick.

**How will it be ensured that students are sent home with any signs of illness and that students are not sent to school with symptoms (including parents using a fever-reducing medication)?**

The nurses will help to monitor this for GPS.

**Does my child really need to stay home every time he/she has congestion, or can I just send them in because it's usual congestion, or will I need to bring a note from the allergist?**

COVID symptoms will need to be analyzed, and families will need to contact their medical provider if they have a child with symptoms, especially out of the norm for the usual symptoms associated with a common allergy.

**How will contact tracing work with so many families involved?**

The medical professionals handle this for GPS. The Health Department has access to specific data not available to GPS.

**What happens if a kid is sick but the parents don't want to get them tested?**

The nurse will work with those families.

**How easy would it be to get tested and how long would the results take? What if a family doesn't have insurance, who pays for the test?**

Currently, it is very fast in Connecticut. As of July 22nd, a test was returned within 24 hours. However, this could change at any time.

**Can we require tests among staff, faculty, and students?**

No, we cannot require testing.

**Will teachers have priority for Covid testing with quick results if they suspect they have covid or have been exposed?**

The District does not administer COVID-19 testing; this is completed through medical professionals.

**How will the town handle families that don't want to be vaccinated?**

By law, families have a right to be in school if they sign the appropriate waiver forms.

**What are the criteria being used to determine whether a school is at low or moderate risk?**

This is based on the number of COVID cases in and around the region, district, or a particular school. Medical professionals determine the risk.

**Are there any plans for when flu season gets in full swing? Will there still be school?**

COVID and Flu have many similar symptoms, and it is anticipated that during the height of flu season if COVID is still highly active that it could be challenging. The district must be prepared to switch to full remote learning at any time during the school year with very little notice.