

Stonington Public Schools

Stonington Middle School
Reopening Plan

2020-2021

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Introduction

Stonington Public Schools will open the 2020-21 school year with two options for families and students. The first is the hybrid model where students attend two days per week in school and three days per week virtual instruction. The second option is full distance learning where the student will receive all instruction online via Google Classroom and other platforms. Due to the changing environment related to COVID-19, these two options will be reevaluated in mid-October with the hope to provide full in school instruction as soon as we can in a safe environment.

The District has always believed that a full at home option should be available to all families. The decision to also offer the hybrid model was made after hours of deliberation with input from many sources including the Connecticut Department of Public Health, Ledge Light Health District, Center for Disease Control (CDC), regional districts, current employees and families, employee associations, district nursing staff, Stonington's District Medical Advisor Dr. Michael Blefeld, M.D., and others. This was not an easy decision and will not please everyone. However, student and staff safety was the primary consideration along with the need to provide the best possible instructional setting for all students.

The hybrid model meets many of the CDC guidelines. The CDC offers three guiding principles stating:

Lowest Risk: Students and teachers engage in virtual-only classes, activities, and events

More Risk: Small, in-person classes, activities, and events. Groups of students stay together and with the same teacher throughout/across school days and groups do not mix. Students remain at least 6 feet apart and do not share objects

Highest Risk: Full sized, in-person classes, activities, and events. Students are not spaced apart, share classroom materials or supplies, and mix between classes and activities

The hybrid model is a blend of the **Lowest** and **More Risk** categories. Students will be seated at a minimum of 6 feet apart to meet the CDC minimum social distancing requirement. Teachers and students will be required to wear masks except when a teacher is providing direct instruction or there are scheduled mask breaks. Students in Pre-K through 8th grade will be primarily in cohorts with exceptions for special education services, interventions, survey classes, and bus transportation. Following the CDC guidelines provides the safest option for students and staff members.

The District also considered recommendations from staff members. In a recent survey, approximately 70% of teachers preferred the hybrid model or full in person model over the distance learning option. In addition, the President of the Stonington Educators Association sent an official letter of support for the hybrid model for Stonington teachers.

Another supporter of the hybrid option is the District's medical advisor, Dr. Blefeld. As a medical professional who also understands the need for students to have direct contact with teachers, his opinion is very important.

Lastly, the District has completed two surveys of families and staff members. The majority of staff (approximately 90%) have indicated they will return to an in person conditionally on safety protocols. The survey also indicated that approximately 20% of families would prefer the full distance learning option over the hybrid option.

The following items in this report outline details of the hybrid program. Each school will take this information and formulate a School Plan that includes the District guidelines and also offers site specific details that will be helpful to parents and staff members. Those site plans will be available on the District website and on school websites by August 12th.

Definitions:

Hybrid – Two days per week in school and three days of instruction virtually

Full Distance Learning - Parents may choose for students to receive 100% instruction virtually

(Both models will follow the identical school schedule)

Communications

The District will continue to provide information to parents and staff members through letters/emails related to school opening issues. These letters will also be placed on the District and school websites for review.

COVID-19 SAFETY LIAISONS AND RESPONSE TEAMS

<p align="center">District COVID-19 Liaisons:</p> <p>Student/Staff Health Monitoring: Gloria Murray DeBiasi, Nursing Supervisor</p> <p>COVID-19 Safety Issues: Peter Anderson, Director of Operations and Facilities</p> <p>COVID-19 Employment Issues: SPS Business Office Therese Roush, HR/Benefits Coordinator Shana Howard, Business Office Assistant</p>	<p align="center">SHS COVID- 19 Liaisons:</p> <p>Student/Staff Health Monitoring: Carol Wollschlager, RN</p> <p>COVID-19 Safety Issues: Tim Smith, Principal Deanna Brucoli, Assistant Principal</p>
<p align="center">District COVID -19 Response Team:</p> <p>Van Riley, Superintendent of Schools Mary Anne Butler, Assistant Superintendent Allison Van Etten, Director of Special Services Peter Anderson, Director Operations and Facilities Gloria Murray-DeBiasi, Nursing Supervisor</p>	<p align="center">SHS COVID-19 Response Team:</p> <p>Carol Wollschlager, RN Tim Smith, Principal Deanna Brucoli, Assistant Principal</p>

Academics and Social-Emotional Learning

Academics

- District

- Cohorts are determined alphabetically. Last names A-K are in Cohort A. Last names L-Z are in Cohort B. Principals may make cohort changes if there are two students in a family with different last names or to meet certain special education requirements
- Families may choose between the hybrid model for modified in-person programming or the full distance learning program for their child(ren)
- Cohorts may not be fully maintained due to special education needs or other individual student needs

Model	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Hybrid model In-person by cohort	Cohort A (in-person)	Cohort A (in-person)	All students and staff in (distance learning)	Cohort A (distance learning)	Cohort A (distance learning)
	Cohort B (distance learning)	Cohort B (distance learning)		Cohort B (in-person)	Cohort B (in-person)
Full Distance Learning Model	All students and teachers in a Full Distance Learning Model according to the school schedule				

- Updated district calendar ([2020-21 calendar](#)) with September 8-10th as early release days for teacher professional development and planning
- Transferring to and from the hybrid/full distance learning models with one week written notice to the school
- **Special Education/504:** SPS remains committed to providing FAPE (free appropriate public education) for special education students. During the COVID 19 pandemic, the delivery of FAPE to all students will vary depending upon the delivery model. Special consideration for additional in-person days will be made for “**high needs**” special education students who may not be able to fully/independently participate in virtual instruction, have intensive related services schedules, behavior intervention plans and/or have services that cannot be provided virtually. Also, special education and related services will only be offered virtually for those opting for the “At Home Learning” (5 days a week at home). IF special education or related services will be delivered differently than the current IEP indicates, Learning Model IEP Implementation Plans will be drafted to describe the delivery of services. The Model IEP Implementation Plans will be reviewed with families, prior to the start of school. 504 accommodation plans will also be reviewed, in the context of the instructional plan.

- **SMS**
 - Cohorts are designed for the seamless instruction of both in-building and distance learning simultaneously

Social-Emotional Learning

- **District**
 - The first week of school (Sept 8th-11th) will be designed for addressing student engagement, socialization, reestablishing friendships, community building, and learning routines
 - Social-Emotional Learning will be addressed in both formal and informal programming at all levels
- **SMS**
 - Increased Advisory time scheduled to support SEL for all students
 - Continuation of the Second Step curriculum
 - Schedule support hours for all guidance and mental health staff during at-home learning times

Assessments

- **District**
 - A modified district assessment calendar will be developed after the initial weeks of school
 - State assessments will be administered or suspended as directed by the CSDE
- **SMS**
 - The block schedule will encourage more performance assessment tasks for students

Facilities

Ventilation

- **District**
 - The district is working to accurately set the most efficient, safe program to allow fresh air into the building. The focus at each school is to increase the exhaust of the building air to achieve a higher dilution rate
 - No fans can be used to circulate air in the rooms
 - Room fans can be used to exhaust only
 - No HEPA filters are to be brought into schools without permission from the Director of Facilities
 - All classroom doors should be locked and left in the open position to prevent touching of the doors
 - [DPH Ventilation guidance](#)
- **SMS**
 - Classroom windows will be opened as feasible

Classroom Layout/Materials

- **District**
 - Furniture will be repositioned to allow students to face in the same direction wherever feasible
 - Non-essential furniture will be removed if necessary to allow for maximum space for social distancing

- Teacher desktop shields - one per teacher, additional lectern shields as needed
- Desk shields/barriers will be available for small group instruction and smaller learning spaces or as needed in the hybrid model
- The sharing of materials will be limited to the extent feasible
- Materials will be reduced to the extent practicable to make cleaning more efficient
- Area rugs and additional resources made of fabric (stuffed animals, hand puppets, etc.) will be removed and stored
- Extra PPE/disinfecting provided for smaller spaces used for small group instruction and related service classrooms
- **SMS**
 - A select number of individual student barriers will be available in smaller classrooms as needed for small group instruction (Hybrid re-entry model)
 - Individual materials will be assigned as practical
 - As much as is practical, teachers will distribute handouts and materials electronically to students' Chromebooks

Lockers

- **District**
 - No lockers will be available at any school
- **SMS**
 - Upon arrival, students will report directly to classrooms with all belongings. We will revisit a protocol for storing winter coats in lockers later in the fall. Since students will remain in the same room for most of the school day, it makes sense for them to keep their backpacks in that room

Outdoor Learning/Dining Areas

- **District**
 - Two 20 ft. x 40 ft. tents will be provided to each site
 - Use of outdoor spaces, tents, and playgrounds will be encouraged for learning/lunch/mask breaks as appropriate.
 - Playgrounds will be available with appropriate social distancing requirements
 - Students will complete hand washing before and after playground use
 - Playgrounds will be routinely cleaned, no disinfectants will be needed on equipment as UV light, temperature, and air movement are sufficient
- **SMS**
 - Additional picnic-style tables and two additional shade structures ordered
 - Outdoor spaces will be set up and utilized throughout the day and lunches as appropriate
 - Classroom teachers will plan a regular rotation of classes to the outdoor spaces

Signage and Visual Aid Stickers

- **District**
 - Directional floor markings to control foot traffic will be installed at each school

- Signage will be installed at six-foot intervals down the middle of the hallways and throughout large areas such as the cafeteria and library
- CDC’s “Stop the Spread” and “Proper Handwashing” posters will be installed throughout each building. (masks, hand washing, know the symptoms, and social distancing)
- All schools will have “No entry without Masks” signage installed at each entry
- SMS
 - Traffic flow patterns and other physical distancing reminders and spacing guides will be added
 - The administrators may add signage/stickers with prior approval from Director of Facilities

COVID-19 Related Custodial Practices

Custodial Practices

- District
 - Stonington Public Schools will be following the Connecticut State Department of Public Health’s Outline for cleaning schools. The outline is shown below
 - **Before School Opens:** Perform routine cleaning. Any areas in school buildings that have been unoccupied for seven (7) or more days need only routine cleaning, not disinfection
 - **After School Opens:** Identify which areas need only cleaning and which need cleaning and disinfecting
 - Areas needing only routine cleaning include:
 - Outdoor areas such as benches, tables, railings, and playground equipment. – Areas or items located indoors that are not touched or used frequently, such as floors, walls, windows, carpeting, light fixtures, and air vents
 - Areas needing cleaning, followed by disinfection include: High-touch areas (doors, push bars, desks, chair backs), bathrooms, cafeteria horizontal surfaces
 - Each school will have a schedule for cleaning and disinfection
 - Daily- routine cleaning/disinfecting of all areas of the school used throughout the day with particular attention to “high-touch” surfaces
 - Twice daily clean and disinfect bathroom surfaces
 - Stonington Public Schools uses Hillyard QT Plus disinfectant along with Hillyard’s green cleaning products for all cleaning disinfecting protocols
 - Cleaning Products: detergent products (soap) and water are effective for surface cleaning and are very effective at removing the virus that causes COVID-19 from surfaces. Alternate cleaners include commercially prepared cleaning products from Hillyard. **All cleaning products purchased by schools** must comply with the [Connecticut School Green Cleaning Law](#). Consult the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services [Environmentally Preferred Purchasing Program](#) for cleaning products that comply with the Green Cleaning Law
 - Disinfection Products:
 - No outside chemicals, cleansers, fans, dehumidifiers, air conditioners or HEPA filters are to be brought into any school without approval from the Director of Facilities and Operations
 - Hillyard’s QT plus will be provided in every classroom
 - QT plus is registered as a green product approved by the State of Connecticut

- Proper training regarding the use of disinfectants
 - Opening windows and/or ensuring ventilation system fans are running during cleaning and disinfecting will reduce exposure to the chemicals in these products
 - Custodial or other staff performing cleaning and disinfecting activities will be trained in the safe use and application of the disinfectants
 - Custodial staff will be equipped with proper personal protective equipment (PPE), including gloves, eye protection, respiratory protection, and other protective equipment, as required by the product manufacturer. See the product label and SDS (Safety Data Sheet) for each product used for specific PPE recommendations
 - Hybrid model to include additional disinfectant/sanitizing day on Wednesdays and Saturdays
 - **SMS**
 - Each classroom will be sanitized when the cohort of students leave the room to go to their survey classes
 - Survey classrooms will be sanitized during periods when not in use
 - Lunchroom tables will be cleaned and sanitized between each lunch group

Mitigation Measures-Routines and Expectations

Transition Times

- **District**
 - All transition times and routines including arrival, change of class, lunch and dismissal will be established to maximize the protection of cohorts (PreK-8) and maintain all safety mitigation measures (PreK-12)
 - Training for staff will occur before the commencement of the school year and all students will be provided training the first week of the school year
 - Cohorts of students to limit mixing as appropriate (varies by level)
 - PreK-8 will remain in an assigned cohort throughout the day with the exception of access to special education/related services, reading/math intervention, and special areas/survey classes
 - Lunch may be served in the classrooms, cafeteria or both to maximize social distancing for students and staff
 - Food allergies will be accommodated
- **SMS**
 - Cohorts of students will remain in the same classroom for the majority of the school day
 - Students will only traffic in the hallways to go to survey classes, art, music, PE, etc. and possibly lunch
 - Traffic patterns to and from their classes rooms will be designed to maintain physical distancing
 - When feasible, some of the movement will be outside the building following the sidewalks and allow for mask breaks at the same time
 - SMS will need additional hall monitors to ensure physical distancing during transitions, lunches, and restroom use

Handwashing

- **District**
 - Frequent hand washing/hand sanitizing
 - Entering/exiting a setting or classroom

- Before/after breakfast, lunch and snack
- Every classroom will have a hand sanitizer station
- Hand sanitizing upon leaving the bus or before entering school including return from recess
- **SMS**
 - Hand washing will be encouraged in the classrooms with sinks
 - All classrooms will have hand sanitizer dispensers

Mask and Mask Breaks

- **District**
 - [Link](#) to District Policy
 - Masks are required for all staff and students
 - Any visitor allowed into the building at the discretion of the principal must wear a mask
 - Masks are required for drivers, monitors and students on the bus
 - Masks should be a two ply cloth mask that covers the nose and the mouth.
 - Single ply masks such as bandanas or neck cowl masks should not be used
 - Families are encouraged to provide a mask for their child
 - The district will provide masks as needed for staff and students
 - Periodic mask breaks will be scheduled for all students by the building principals
 - Individuals with chronic health conditions/disabilities or students in PreK may request an exemption from the mask requirement
- **SMS**
 - Teachers will provide regular mask breaks for students throughout the day
 - A rotation of outdoor space will also be used to offer mask breaks
 - Traffic patterns will be routed outdoors on the sidewalk when feasible to provide additional mask breaks

Zone Assignments for Staff

- **District**
 - Masks are to be worn in all common areas and in meetings
 - Visitors are allowed only at the discretion of the building administrator and should be extremely limited
 - Staff to use entrance/exits and restrooms closest to their office/classroom/work space
- **SMS**
 - Staff will be directed to several alternate locations for lunches to reduce the number of teachers in the staff room at the same time. Locations such as the small kitchen area on the second floor and the conference room will be used. In addition, some outdoor seating will be available for staff lunches.
 - The copiers at SMS are placed more than 6 feet apart already. Social distancing markers will be added to maintain distance for any teachers waiting to use the copiers

Meetings and Professional Development

- **District**
 - Leadership team meetings will occur remotely whenever feasible
 - Cabinet meetings will occur in person with social distancing measures in place

- District curriculum meetings and larger professional development sessions will occur remotely or in a combination of in person and remotely to maximize social distancing
- Board meetings/subcommittee meetings will occur in person with public access via video streaming
- **SMS**
 - Grade level teams will continue to meet as usual while maintaining physical distance
 - Larger meetings for any purpose will be conducted via Google Meets
 - Alternate locations for staff lunch will be provided to ensure physical distancing in the staff room, etc.

Visitors

- **District**
 - Visitors, volunteers, and consultants will not be allowed access into the buildings
 - Parents or family members may be allowed into the school at the discretion of the building administrator (e.g. student emergency situation)
 - Student drop off and pick up procedures will be modified and will take place outside of the school building
 - Meetings/PPTs with parents and families will occur virtually when feasible
 - Parents should expect early dismissal and late arrivals to be longer than usual due to new building protocols
- **SMS**
 - As much as possible, any visitors will be restricted to the school office area

Transportation

Loading and unloading of buses

- **District**
 - The goal of the district is to operate buses at a maximum 50% capacity to allow one student per seat
 - Recent survey results indicated only about 30% of students would require bus services
 - Loading will occur starting from the back of the bus forward
 - Bus disembarkment will start from the front of the bus first
 - Masks must be worn by all students, drivers, monitors upon entry and throughout any bus trip
 - Families are requested to provide masks for their children
 - Bus drivers will have masks available for students as needed
 - Assigned seats are encouraged to the extent practicable
 - First Student will clean/disinfect all buses
 - **No changes to bus schedules will be allowed to accommodate short term after school programming, religious education drop offs, etc. For safety purposes the transportation schedules must be static**
 - Student drop off and pick up procedures will be modified and will take place outside of the school building
 - Parents should expect early dismissal and late arrivals to be longer than usual due to new building protocols
 - No late buses will be available for academic, athletics, or extracurricular activities
- **SMS**
 - Students will be called by bus number and take their assigned seat on the bus. (The same seat as the morning pick up.)

- Students for parent pick up will line up physically distanced outside weather permitting
- Physical distancing lines for parent pick up dismissal will be designated

Technology

Devices and Routines

- **District**
 - All students in PreK-12 will be provided devices
 - All devices must be charged every evening at home in preparation for learning in person or remotely
 - Chargers must remain at home at all times, buildings will have extra chargers for emergencies only
- **SMS**
 - Students are expected to follow all expectations as outlined in the SPS Acceptable Use Policy

Extracurricular and Athletics

Guidelines and Transportation

- **District**
 - The Superintendent/Designee will consider CIAC guidelines, recommendations from the EEC and the local public health authority pertaining to athletics, but maintain his/her authority to limit, suspend, or cancel athletic practices and events as needed to protect student safety
 - After school clubs will be limited and will follow CIAC/EEC guidelines
 - No late buses will be provided
 - Parents/families must provide transportation to and from after school activities
- **SMS**
 - Will adapt CIAC guidelines as necessary with direction from the superintendent
 - Will adapt CIAC guidelines as necessary with direction from the superintendent to all extracurricular activities
 - Additional clubs/activities will transition to online formats

Training for Staff, Students and Families

Staff - Training Before the Start of the School Year

- **District**
 - **Training for all staff on COVID-19 safety measures prior to the start of school year including:**
 - Social distancing, cleaning protocols, hygiene practices, knowing the symptoms, mask wearing, reasons to stay home, and self-assessments
 - Refreshers/reminders regularly provided
 - **Technology software and protocol live/recorded training including:**
 - Use of Google Meet, Google Classroom, ParentSquare, GoGuardian and the Learn Platform
 - Best practices on live streaming in the classroom
- **SMS**
 - Training on running Successful Advisory sessions
 - Training on increasing active student engagement in distance learning

Students/Families - Training Before the Start of the School Year

- **District**
 - **Training for students/families on COVID-19 safety measures:**
 - Training videos/links sent to students and families prior to the start of school
 - Formal training for students to take place on the first day of school
 - Social distancing, hygiene practices, knowing the symptoms, mask wearing
 - Refreshers/reminders regularly provided

Health Protocols and Practices

Containment Rooms

- **District**
 - Containment Rooms for those experiencing COVID-19 symptoms
 - Fever and one additional COVID-19 symptom = Containment Area
 - Will warrant immediate dismissal from school
 - Containment room is separate from nurses clinic
 - Refreshers/reminders regularly provided specific to symptoms of COVID-19
- **SMS**
 - Room 131 is the containment room at SMS. This is the first room in the office suite from the academic wing. It is adjacent to both the nurse's clinic and the School Based Health Center. This room will also allow the student to exit the school with the parent without returning to any of the school hallways

Decision Tree

o District

- A Decision Tree will be utilized by school nurses, with specific steps to take for suspected COVID-19 cases/symptoms
 - Daily tracking of students exhibiting symptoms by the school nurse and daily reports to nursing supervisor
 - Daily tracking of staff reporting symptoms and daily reports to nursing supervisor
 - District Level Response Team to receive and act upon daily clinic reports
 - o Nursing Supervisor
 - o Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent
 - o Director of Special Services
 - o Facilities Director
 - Regular consultation with school medical advisor, Dr. Michael Blefeld and Ledge Light Health District will occur specific to matters of required quarantine for positive test cases of either staff or students and subsequent notifications based upon the availability of contact tracing
- Specific and repeated follow up with families and staff for compliance with mandated at home quarantine periods

Restriction to Clinics

o District

- Student access to the Health Clinics will be restricted with an emphasis on implementing basic first aid in the classroom (loose tooth, mosquito bite, chapped lips, etc.)
- Each classroom will be provided a first aid kit

Health Information and Self-Monitoring

o District

- The District Website houses a Health Section for posting information and updates for families to access
- Parents/Guardians/Staff will acknowledge receipt of required procedures for masks, daily self-assessments, symptoms, and quarantine/stay at home requirements by signing the Parent/Family Acknowledgement Form