

Stonington Public Schools

District
Reopening Plan

2020-2021

Contents

Introduction.....	3-4
Communications.....	4
COVID-19 Safety Liaisons and Response Teams.....	5
Academic and Social Emotional Learning.....	6-7
Facilities	7-8
COVID19 –Related Custodial Practices.....	8-9
Mitigation Measures – Routines and Expectations	9-10
Transportation	11
Technology.....	11
Extracurricular and Athletics	11
Training for Staff, Students and Families	12
Health Protocols and Practices.....	12-13
Special Program Implications	13
Financial Implications	14
Employee Issues	14
Attachments:	

- (1) Dr. Blefeld Statement
- (2) CDC Document
- (3) CEA Document

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

District COVID-19 Liaisons:

Student/Staff Health Monitoring:

Gloria Murray DeBiasi, Nursing Supervisor

COVID-19 Safety Issues:

Peter Anderson, Director of Operations and Facilities

COVID-19 Employment Issues:

SPS Business Office

Therese Roush, HR/Benefits Coordinator

Shana Howard, Business Office Assistant

District COVID -19 Response Team:

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

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

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

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

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](#)

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

Lockers

- **District**
 - No lockers will be available at any school

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Decision Tree

- 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

- Nursing Supervisor
- Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent
- Director of Special Services
- 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

- **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

- **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

Special Program Implications

The Pre-K programs located at DMS and WVSS will continue with the current schedule with AM/PM programs. A thorough cleaning/disinfecting will take place after each session.

Stonington High School has requested the following changes in policies:

- 1) For the 2020-21 school year, seniors may take only courses required to complete the graduation requirements. To participate in extracurricular activities a student must take a minimum of four Carnegie units. (Currently seniors must take six courses.)
- 2) For the 2020-21 school year, the high school administration, with the approval of the superintendent, can approve dual enrollment of students to attend an accredited college at the student's family expense. (This will allow some students to complete units at the college level in addition to graduation requirements.)
- 3) For the 2020-21 school year, students who complete graduation requirements by the end of the first semester could not take classes in the spring but come back in June to participate in graduation

Financial Implications

In order to implement the two programs, hybrid and full distance learning instruction, the following increases in budget/expenditures are required:

Paraprofessionals as hall/restroom monitors:	\$144,379
Additional custodian at each site for cleaning/disinfecting:	\$272,299
Bus monitors (increase in First Student contract one semester):	\$135,683
Bus disinfection	\$ 5,760
District liaisons and communications (nurse hours, communications)	\$ 22,800
PPE	\$141,000
Student masks	\$20,000
Staff masks	\$20,000
Teacher desk barriers	\$63,000
Face shields staff/students	\$ 8,000
Student desk barriers	\$22,000
Hand sanitizer	\$ 8,000
Tents (two per site for outdoor instruction/shade)	\$ 24,000
Custodial supplies	<u>\$ 29,700</u>
Total	\$775,621

These are initial costs and these may change as COVID issues change.

Employee Issues

Employees have many questions about leave requirements, use of sick leave, employment status, etc. The District is working with employee associations, legal consultants and others concerning these issues. As information becomes available, staff will be provided with details concerning all of these issues. The goal is to have most employment questions answered by August 21.

Attachments:

- 1) Dr. Blefeld Statement
- 2) CDC Document
- 3) CEA Document