



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Andrea Clark, 203-255-7968, aclark2@fairfield.schools.org

Fairfield Public Schools Welcomes Students Back to School

FAIRFIELD, CT — Fairfield Public Schools will welcome over 9,000 students on Tuesday, September 8, the first day of the 2020-21 school year. As the opening of school approaches, Fairfield Public Schools Superintendent Mike Cummings acknowledged that this will be a school year like no other and highlighted what the district has done to ensure the safety and well-being of students, teachers, staff and families.

“This year we are all first year learners - students, families and staff alike. It doesn’t matter how long you’ve been part of Fairfield Public Schools, this year will be a new experience for all of us.” said Cummings. “We understand that all our teachers have a steep learning curve ahead and we will support them. However, we begin the new school year in a strong position, with a strong focus on building relationships and supporting the social and emotional well-being of all our students, teachers and staff.”

This past week, PK - 12 students attended “Trial Run” days in their school buildings to meet their teachers and walk through the new safety protocols, including social distancing and mask wearing. “We are so proud of our Fairfield students and the outstanding job they did during the trial runs. At all levels, from our youngest learners through high school, they understand the importance of the changes we have had to make. School may look different in many ways, but what hasn’t changed is the importance of the relationships students have with their teachers. We were all thrilled to be getting kids back into the buildings.”

Cummings said that, as early as May 2020, his staff has been busy getting ready for the students’ return, revising curriculum to incorporate blended learning, based on parent and staff survey responses about the 2019-20 distance learning experience. Over 50 teachers across the district served on curriculum committees over the summer.

In July, the district put forward a Reopening Plan with input from all stakeholders. Fairfield Education Association (FEA) President Bob Smoler, representing teachers as a member of the School Reopening Committee, participated in numerous virtual meetings in May and June. Throughout late June and July, Committee members, including Mr. Smoler, had multiple opportunities to provide input on and suggested revisions to the draft Reopening Plan, which many did. In a July 22 email to Superintendent Cummings, responding to the Plan, Smoler stated “Wow!! Very thorough and very informative. Every base I could think of has been touched. My sincere congratulations to your team.”



Since then, there have been a number of updates and changes to the plan reflecting the evolving situation, significant changes to guidance issued by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), as well as input from parents, teachers, and staff. All updates have been communicated to families and staff and can be found on the FPS website www.fairfieldschools.org.

Some of the changes Cummings has highlighted include:

- Social distancing, mask wearing, and cleaning protocols to keep students and staff safe include new building signage, floor markings, additional custodial staff and have been communicated to staff and are posted on the FPS website. Teachers received initial supplies of PPE, including face masks, hand sanitizer, and other supplies upon their return to their school buildings on August 31. We are well stocked with PPE for the coming school year.
- Using Google Meet for synchronous lessons. Google Meet requires no additional equipment beyond a device with a built-in camera and microphone (e.g. Chromebook or Windows laptop). We are ensuring that any teachers who still need a device will get one. Many teachers used Google Meet in the spring and we will provide additional professional development once school begins.
- Remote Learning Academy (RLA) teachers are meeting as a staff today, and working collaboratively to plan next week's RLA Orientation Days.
- All teacher assignments have been made and student schedules posted in our Infinite Campus system.

In a communication to families and staff, Cummings said "...we hear you and are responding. We will continue to make changes as school begins and throughout the year, as circumstances change. We ask for your continued patience and flexibility. The only two things we can be certain of this year is that there will be more change and that we will continue to put the needs of our students first in decision-making."

Today, Cummings shared, "All of us at Fairfield Public Schools appreciate the support we have received from our families, teachers, staff, and of course, our Board of Education. We recognize that this important work requires all of us to work as partners, both to support student learning and the safety protocols that need to be practiced both and in and out of school. We are ready and excited to welcome our students back on Tuesday."

About Fairfield Public Schools:

The mission of the Fairfield Public Schools, in partnership with families and community, is to ensure that every student acquires the knowledge and skills needed to be a lifelong learner, responsible citizen, and successful participant in an ever changing global society through a comprehensive educational program

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