

Amity Regional School District Reopening – October 2020 Update

Reopening schools for full in-person learning has been a goal since the publication of the first reopening plan in August. As noted in the August document, “this plan was developed with the eventual goal of a full return of all students to full-time, in-person learning.” We have spent the entire first marking period in preparation for full in-person learning.

The decision of the district's instruction model will be based on leading and secondary indicators and metrics identified in [Addendum 4](#) of the CT Department of Education's reopening plan. These are identified by [town](#) and by [county](#). As noted in Addendum 4 of the CSDE reopening plan, “the experience in our state since school reopening began indicates that transmission has been a rare event inside of school buildings even in communities with elevated transmission rates, likely due to the high-level of planning and compliance with mitigation strategies designed to prevent transmission between individuals. This same level of planning and compliance is not necessarily in place in other settings outside of school buildings.” When we developed our reopening plan, we wanted to provide families and staff advance notice before changing learning models, however, we recognize that adjustments and flexibility might be required overnight.

The letter to the community sent on October 23, 2020 identified a target date of November 5, 2020 for a return to full in-person learning. The letter also indicated that data would be monitored up to that date and adjustments would be made based on data. The data reviewed with the Orange Health Department and the Quinnipiack Valley Health District on October 30, 2020 suggest remaining in the hybrid model for the time being. We will continue to monitor the leading and secondary indicators and will return to full in-person learning when the data supports more in-school instruction.

Leading Indicator

Leading Indicator	MORE In-Person Learning	Re-assess strategies to determine appropriate balance of in-person and remote learning (hybrid learning)	LESS In-Person Learning
Number of new cases of COVID-19 (14-day average of new cases per 100,000 population per day)	< 10 new cases per 100,000 per day	10 to < 25 cases per 100,000 per day	25+ cases per 100,000 per day

The CSDE and CT DPH use the 14-day average of new cases per 100,000 population per day as the leading indicator for determining the instructional model. The data in the Amity communities since the start of the school year is:

Reporting Period	Bethany	Orange	Woodbridge	Amity
8/30/2020 - 9/5/2020*	7.8	3.1	1.6	4.2
09/06/2020 - 09/12/2020*	5.2	1.0	1.6	2.6
09/13/2020 - 09/19/2020*	5.2	2.0	1.6	2.9
09/20/2020 - 09/26/2020*	2.6	3.1	4.9	3.5
09/27/2020 - 10/10/2020	13.0	4.1	3.2	6.8
10/04/2020 - 10/17/2020	10.4	6.7	4.9	7.3
10/11/2020 - 10/24/2020	10.4	9.7	10.5	10.2

* The DPH changed from a 7-day average to a 14-day average on October 15, 2020.

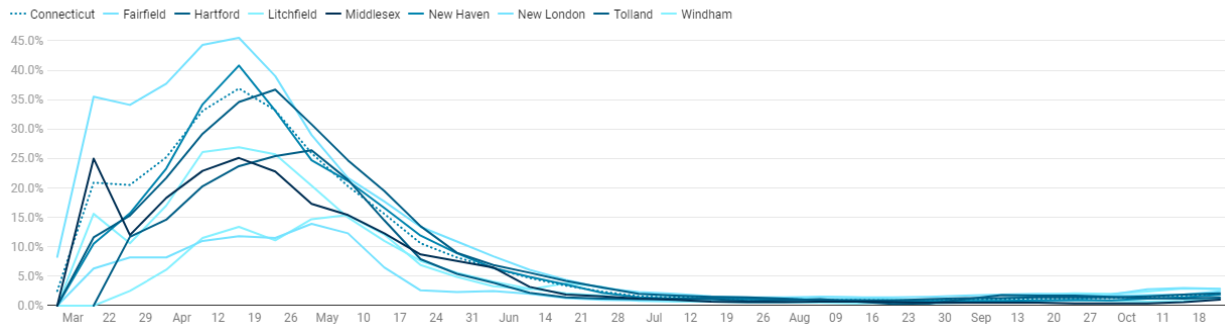
As noted in Addendum 4, “analyzing any of the suggested leading or secondary indicators at the individual town or school district level in our state may result in rates that are too unstable to be of any use in continuous decision-making.” Amity is fortunate that we can consider all three towns that we serve, as well as the New Haven county indicators when decision-making.

Secondary Indicators

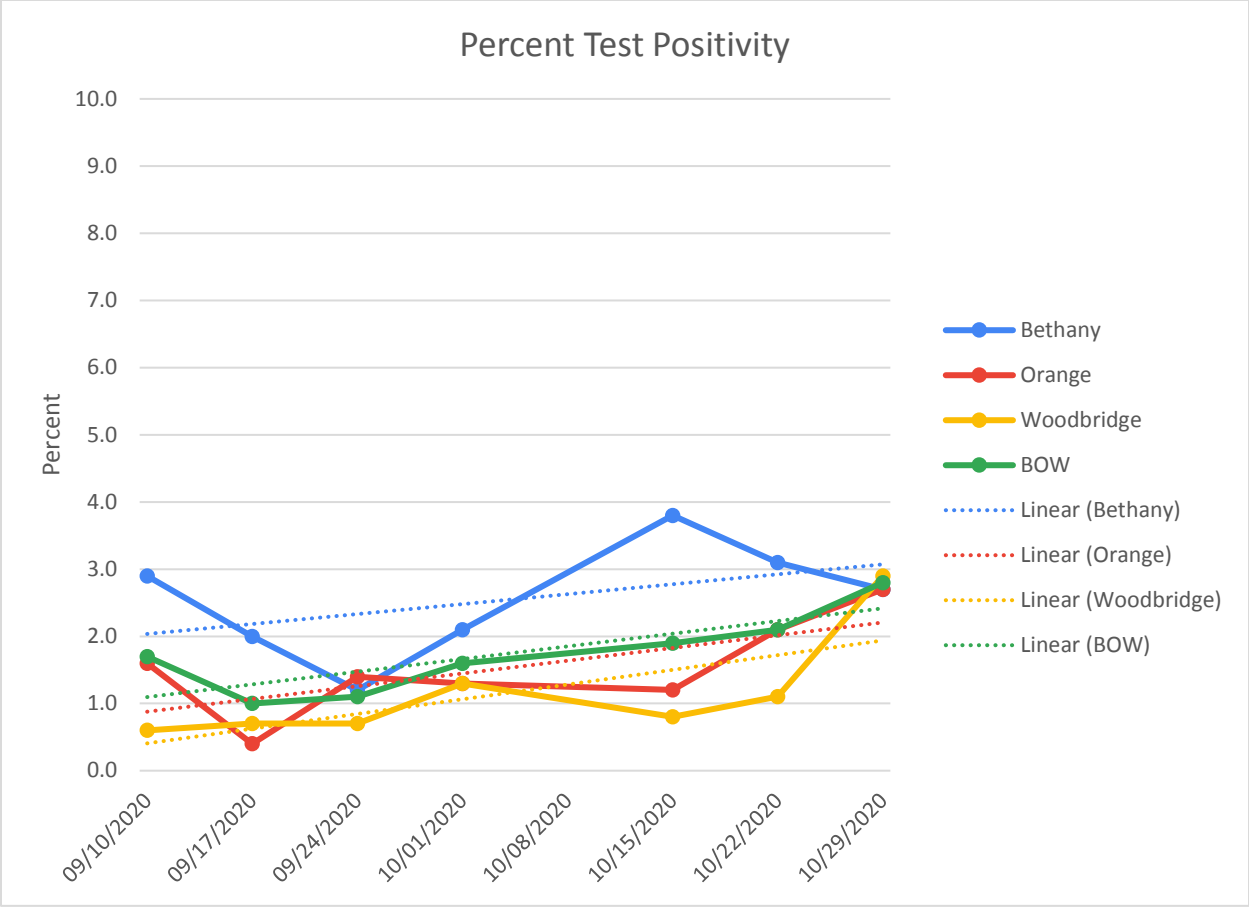
Secondary Indicators	MORE In-Person Learning	Re-assess strategies to determine appropriate balance of in-person and remote learning (hybrid learning)	LESS In-Person Learning
Percent positivity rate <i>(# of positive tests/ # of total tests, 14-day average)</i>	Secondary Indicators trending down to flat	<u>Direction of Change:</u> Secondary Indicators trending flat to upward	Secondary Indicators trending upward
Number of new COVID-19 hospitalizations per 100,000 population <i>(14-day average)</i>	No statistically significant changes to Secondary Indicators	<u>Speed of Change:</u> Any statistically significant changes upward to Secondary Indicators	Consistent, statistically significant changes upward to Secondary Indicators
COVID-like and Influenza-like Illness (CLI and ILI) Syndromic Surveillance			

From a historical perspective, the percent test positivity at the start of the pandemic in Connecticut in March 2020 is very different from now – even as cases increase in the state.

Percent Test Positivity (14-Day Average)



The first indicator, percent test positivity, is shown on the next page for all three towns since the start of the school year. While there are fluctuations from data point to data point, the plot of the trend line demonstrates the overall pattern. The slope of all three trend lines is statistically zero, but the slope is rising, a trend favoring less in-person learning.



The Indicators on COVID-19 hospitalizations and COVID-like and Influenza-like Illness cannot be monitored at the town level, since numbers on the town level are so low. However, it can be monitored at a county level and the data from New Haven County since the beginning of the school year is as follows:

Reporting Period	COVID-19 Hospitalizations	COVID-like illness
08/30/2020 - 09/12/2020	0.4	1.7
09/06/2020 - 09/19/2020	0.6	1.9
09/13/2020 - 09/26/2020	0.5	2.0
09/20/2020 - 10/03/2020	0.4	2.1
09/27/2020 - 10/10/2020	0.5	2.5
10/11/2020 - 10/24/2020	0.8	2.9

As noted in Addendum 4, “analyzing any of the suggested leading or secondary indicators at the individual town or school district level in our state may result in rates that are too unstable to be of any use in continuous decision-making.” Therefore, the state summarizes data by county to assist school districts in decision-making. The October 28, 2020 released data is summarized below. New Haven County is identified in the moderate category for both leading and secondary indicators for the first time since the start of the school year.

County	Leading		Secondary			Reporting Period	
	New COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population per day	Leading Indicator Risk Category	Percent test positivity	New COVID-19 hospitalizations per 100,000 population per day	Percent COVID-19-like illness hospital ED visits		Secondary Indicators Risk Category
Fairfield	16.3	Moderate	3.7%	0.8	3.5%	Moderate	10/11/2020 - 10/24/2020
Hartford	13.1	Moderate	2.5%	1.5	1.8%	Moderate	10/11/2020 - 10/24/2020
Litchfield	9.3	Low	2.0%	0.2	1.2%	Low	10/11/2020 - 10/24/2020
Middlesex	11.0	Moderate	1.3%	0.5	1.9%	Moderate	10/11/2020 - 10/24/2020
New Haven	12.6	Moderate	2.5%	0.8	2.9%	Moderate	10/11/2020 - 10/24/2020
New London	20.9	Moderate	3.0%	0.9	3.5%	Moderate	10/11/2020 - 10/24/2020
Tolland	8.2	Low	1.7%	0.1	1.0%	Low	10/11/2020 - 10/24/2020
Windham	13.6	Moderate	3.0%	0.7	1.6%	Moderate	10/11/2020 - 10/24/2020
Connecticut	14.0	-	2.6%	0.9	2.5%	-	10/11/2020 - 10/24/2020

Additional Considerations

Physical Space – When we return to full in-person learning, we can guarantee 3-6 feet spacing for all students. This meets the guidelines from the Orange Health Department and the Quinnipiac Valley Health District. When possible, we will err to more spacing. Spacing will be dependent on the number of students in the class, participating in in-person learning, and room size. For those classes that have higher enrollment of students, we have moved them to larger classrooms.

Cohorting – We will maintain cohort groups in middle schools for core classes. Students will remain in assigned classrooms at assigned desks and core teachers will rotate to the classrooms. This will limit students passing each other in the halls during transitions.

Compliance with self-screening – We continue to have the temperature check at the entrance to our buildings – a recommendation that exceeded CSDE requirements. Additionally, we permit students to participate in school from home when they are ill to encourage them to stay at home when sick. Teachers are also permitted to work from home when ill – again to encourage them to stay home when sick.

Air flow – The Amity HVAC systems are state of the art. We will continue venting fresh air even with the consideration of the additional expense we will incur as we bring in colder air and have to heat the buildings. Air flow is monitored on a daily basis.

Cleaning & Disinfection – We have outfitted classrooms for 100% capacity to acclimate to cleaning process. The custodial staff follows a “deep cleaning” protocol everyday – we do nothing different with respect to cleaning after a confirmed case in our schools because we clean every day as if there was a confirmed case in school. Custodial staffing may be adjusted to meet full in-person learning.

Health & Safety Protocols – A big concern at the start of the school year was compliance with our health and safety expectations – particularly by our students. Our students and staff have demonstrated a high level of compliance with respect to wearing face coverings, washing hands, and maintaining physical distancing. Bus drivers have commended students for their compliance with wearing masks on buses. Our schools will remain open and we will limit the need to quarantine if health and safety practices not only continue in school, but during out of school activities as well.

Contact tracing – When CSDE developed the reopening guidelines, there was no guidance on contact tracing. This has been an area where we have worked closely with our local health districts and have developed a process to contact trace close contacts. With each positive case, we have refined that process and we will continue to do so, as each positive case is unique and generates its own unique response. Having parents update contact information is critical to our ability to contact trace. Classroom seating charts and bus seating charts assist in this process, as do rosters of Amity athletic teams.

Next Steps

At this time, based on the increase in the number of new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population per day, and based on the rising trends of the secondary indicators, the schools in the Amity Regional School District will remain in a hybrid model.

The school day will be extended to 12:47 pm to increase the instructional time. This will begin on Thursday, November 5, 2020. The “early dismissal” time of 12:12 pm will continue to be used when elementary districts have early release day or for the planned early release days on the Amity school calendar. A grab and go lunch will still be provided.

Reopening schools for full in-person learning continues to be a goal for the district and when the leading and secondary indicators support a return to full in-person learning, schools will transition to that learning model. We will offer families the courtesy of advance notice for planning purposes, but will also monitor data up to the target date and will adjust plans according to the data. Parents will continue to be afforded the opportunity to voluntarily opt-out as long as that option is supported by the CT Department of Education.