

# STONINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

40 FIELD STREET · PAWCATUCK, CT 06379

PHONE: (860) 572-0506

FAX: (860) 599-8948



BOARD OF EDUCATION: Frank Todisco, Board Chair; Heidi Simmons, Board Secretary

SUPERINTENDENT  
Van W. Riley, Ph.D.

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT  
Mary Anne Butler

DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL SERVICES  
Allison Van Etten

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE  
Gary J. Shettle

**To:** Parents and Employees of Stonington Public Schools  
**From:** Dr. Van Riley, Superintendent  
**Date:** November 10, 2020  
**Subject:** **Important Change in Schedule after Thanksgiving**

Based on the following information and concerns, there will be a change in the instruction schedules on the two school days following Thanksgiving. **Monday, November 30<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday, December 1<sup>st</sup> will be distance learning days for all students and teachers. Wednesday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> is already a distance learning day as scheduled.** Our Preschool program and District Office Annex program which are typically in-person on Wednesdays, will also participate in distance learning on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Cohort B will return to the regular in-school schedule on Thursday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>. This notification is being sent this week to give families time to plan for those two distance learning days. This decision was made for the following reasons:

- 1) The District is being proactive relative to potential issues with COVID-19 exposure during the Thanksgiving break.
- 2) There is a concern that students and staff members may be exposed through travel or through family gatherings over Thanksgiving. This concern has come from inquiries by families and staff members as to quarantine and testing requirements, if exposed.
- 3) Stonington Public Schools has been diligent with all COVID-19 related protocols such as cohorts, cleaning/disinfecting, PPE/masks, and distancing in order to keep our schools open as long as possible. Neighboring districts (New London, Ledyard, Groton and others) have had forced closings while we have remained open since the commencement of the school year. The decision to reschedule those two days is designed to provide the best opportunity to continue to remain open in our hybrid model.
- 4) Adequate substitute teaching staff and class coverage may not be available on those two days. On Mondays, in general, it has been difficult to obtain qualified substitutes and, after Thanksgiving, may present even further challenges.
- 5) Timing for parents to make arrangements is a priority. We do not want to have to make this call Sunday night or Monday morning of the holiday weekend when/if we receive notice that we do not have enough staff to cover classes or we need to do extensive contact tracing.
- 6) Reducing potential COVID-19 transmission is always a goal and pivoting to a distance learning plan for those two days will help avoid exposure and transmission of COVID-19 in our community.
- 7) The Connecticut Department of Public Health issued this [guidance](#) regarding the Thanksgiving holiday.
- 8) We have consulted with medical advisors and representatives from the health department and they all agree that this is a proactive mitigation measure.

Our hope is that by offering distance learning on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday after Thanksgiving, we will be able to continue to offer our current in-school options through our hybrid schedule. **All District and school buildings will be closed for those three days.** Employees will all be asked to work from home. District and school office phones will be monitored. If there is an outbreak and the health department gives us direction to close beyond those three days or staffing challenges prevent us from returning to the hybrid model, we will notify families and staff as soon as possible. During this time we ask that you continue to report COVID-19 related health concerns via email to the school nurse or administration.

The Food Service Department meal distribution will take place on Monday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>. This will include breakfast and lunch through December 4<sup>th</sup> for distance learners and Cohorts A and B.

If you have any questions about this change in schedule, please call your school administration or the District Office.