



**FAIRFIELD
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Robert Mancusi, Executive Director of Special Education & Special Programs
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Phone (203)255-8379 Fax (203) 255-8247

Dear Parents,

November 24, 2020

In order to address the social and emotional well-being of children and youth in the Fairfield Public Schools amid the current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we plan to survey students in grades three through twelve via self-report between December 1-8, 2020. Students in grades PreK-2 will be assessed via parent report. Parents will be sent a link to the survey December 1, 2020, and will have through December 8, 2020 to complete. Seeking feedback at this uncertain time is an integral part of our schools' abilities to identify needs, reflect on practices and adapt to changes in our world (Reunite, Renew and Thrive: SEL Roadmap for Reopening School, Collaborative for Academic and Social-Emotional Learning (CASEL), 2020). The decision to screen students during this time was determined based on the need to provide students and staff time to re-acclimate to school, and develop relationships and routines (Adapt, Advance, Achieve, CSDE, Sept. 2020).

The information will be used by the FPS solely to address the social-emotional well-being of students, both at the district and building level. Results will be analyzed in order to inform district-wide and building level supports. Access to the results of the surveys will be limited to those who directly serve the student.

For students in grades 3-12, the FPS will utilize core components of the UCLA Brief COVID-19 Screen for Child/Adolescent Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)©, developed by the Regents of the University of California. This is a self-report survey that collects data on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on children and adolescents. The screening instrument is used widely by a range of professionals in child-serving systems such as behavioral health, pediatrics, schools, and child welfare. The survey will take about 15 minutes for students to complete. The survey will be delivered via Google Forms, an online platform with which FPS students are familiar.

Students in grades PreK-2 will be assessed via parent report on the Pediatric Emotional Distress Scale (PEDS) (Saylor, 1999). This is a 21-item survey developed to assess elevated behaviors in children after experiencing traumatic events.

It is important for parents or guardians to know:

- Instruments screen an individual's risk level, in accordance with recommendations by the publisher.
- Screening instruments **do not** formally diagnose mental health conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in children and adolescents.
- All of the questions have been reviewed by specialists, and are deemed appropriate for use with students in grades three through twelve (self-report) and/or parent response (grades K-2).

If you do not want your child to participate, please email Michelle Sierau at msierau@fairfieldschools.org by November 30, 2020. On the day the survey is given, your child may also elect not to participate. There will be no rewards or penalties associated with you or your child's decision to participate.



You may review a sampling of questions from the UCLA Brief Covid-19 screen and PEDS below. There are no foreseeable risks associated with your child/you completing the survey.

UCLA Brief COVID-19 Screen Sample Questions (Grades 3-12)

Prompt: For your reactions to what is happening because of the coronavirus illness, select a number (0, 1, 2, 3, or 4) that shows how often the problem happened to you in the past month.

Response rubric:

- 0 - None
- 1 - Little
- 2 - Some
- 3 - Much
- 4 - Most

- I try to stay away from people, places, or things that remind me about what happened or what is still happening.
- When something reminds me of what happened or is still happening, I get very upset, afraid, or sad.
- I try not to think about or have feelings about what happened or is still happening.
- When something reminds me of what happened, I have strong feelings in my body like my heart beats fast, my headaches or my stomach aches.
- I feel alone even when I am around other people.
- I have trouble going to sleep, wake up often, or have trouble getting back to sleep.

Pediatric Emotional Distress Scale (PEDS)

Response rubric:

- 0 - Almost Never
- 1 - Sometimes
- 2 - Often
- 3 - Very Often

- Wants things right away
- Refuses to sleep alone
- Seems fearful without good reason
- Seems sad and withdrawn
- Seems to be easily startled



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We remain committed to supporting our students and families as we continue to grapple with the uncertainty of these times. Please continue to reach out to your school staff with any questions or concerns you may have regarding your child's social and emotional well-being.

Sincerely,
Rob Mancusi
Executive Director of Special Education & Special Programs

Dana Bossio
Teacher Leader School Psychologists & Social Workers