

Board of Education
Darien, Connecticut

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

THURSDAY, JULY 16, 2020

PLACE:
DARIEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS'
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
MEETING ROOM
8:30 a.m.

AGENDA

1. Call to order..... Mrs. Tara B. Ochman
2. Adjourn to Executive Session for purpose of:
 - a) Discussion regarding negotiations pursuant to Connecticut General Statute 1-200(6)(B)
 - b) Discussion of proposals to operate school cafeterias (discussion proposed for executive session) Connecticut General Statute 1-200(6)(E)
 - c) Discussion of confidential attorney-client communication regarding the reopening of schools Connecticut General Statute 1-200(6)(E)
3. Reconvene in public session

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

PLACE:
DARIEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS'
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
MEETING ROOM
Approx. 10:00 a.m.

1. Board of Education Retreat..... Mrs. Tara Ochman
2. Public Comment*..... Mrs. Ochman

**SPECIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
THURSDAY, JULY 16, 2020**

3. 10:00– 11:15 a.m. – Board Professional Learning

a) Presentation on Role and..... Mrs. Ochman/Patrice McCarthy, C.A.B.E.
Responsibilities of Board of
Education Members

b) Board Self-Evaluation..... Patrice McCarthy, C.A.B.E.

4. 11:15 – 11:30 a.m. - Business Matters

a) Action on Proposed Food..... Mr. Richard Rudl
Service Contract

b) Renewal of Superintendent's... Mrs. Ochman
Contract

11:30 - 12:30 LUNCH

5. 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.

a) Update on the Fall Opening..... Dr. Addley
of Schools

1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

b) Discussion of Athletics..... Mr. Chris Manfredonia

3:30 p.m.

6. Public Comment*

7. Adjournment..... Mrs. Ochman

AA:nv

* Due to the current COVID-19 regulations and restrictions pertaining to public indoor gatherings, the Board of Education meeting will be live streamed. Please check the Darien Public Schools website for the access link for "Public Comment" OR EMAIL publiccomment@darienps.org BY 12:00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, JULY 15.

DARIEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Richard Rudl

Director of Finance and Operations

35 Leroy Avenue, P.O. Box 1167

Darien, CT 06820-1167

TEL: 203-656-7405 FX: 203-656-3502

DATE: July 15, 2020
TO: Board of Education
FROM: Dr. Alan Addley, Superintendent of Schools
Richard Rudl, Director of Finance & Operations

SUBJECT: Food Service Management Company

Summary: After issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Food Service Management Company, we received four submissions. Those submissions included:

- Sodexo
- Chartwells
- Whitson's
- Aramark

A bid review committee was formed consisting of Director of Finance, the Director of Human Resources, Director of Nursing, Elementary Assistant Principal, Middle School Principal and two HS Assistant Principals. The review and consideration was based on the following factors:

- Quality and improvement of menu/food offerings for students
- Transition plan to Darien Public Schools
- Allergy Management protocols
- Financial management including profit guarantee, sales projections and capital investment
- Structure and quality of management staff proposed

The bid review committee was equally impressed by both Sodexo and Chartwells. As a result, a second and final review was conducted with the Superintendent of Schools, Director of Finance and Operations and Director of Human Resources and Sodexo and Chartwells. After these meetings we are recommending Chartwells to be awarded a five-year contract to be the district's food service management company.

Chartwells is being recommended based on the following items:

1. **Menu/Food Offerings:** Chartwells is committed to offering a menu with food created through scratch cooking with options ranging from sushi, fresh deli sandwiches, chef's salads, fresh wraps, fresh salad bars, fresh fruits and vegetables, smoothies, tacos, gyro's, vegetarian options, and multiple entree's daily. With menu enhancement and creativity in menu offerings the expectation is to create a dining experience as opposed to a typical school lunch

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experience. In addition, the ability to offer breakfast options for students should the district consider offering breakfast at a future date. Offering menu's that would provide options that are comparable to restaurants one would visit would elevate not only the quality of the program but the student experience. This is reflected in their commitment to spend almost 40% of revenues on food costs (net of rebates) or 48% before rebates. This is 8% more than the current program spends, which should translate into higher quality options for students.

2. **Transition Plan to Darien:** Chartwells is prepared to operate our food program regardless of the restrictions in place due to the COVID19 pandemic. In fact, Chartwells was provided a multi-facet plan on how they can operate given the usual start to the next school year. This shows a level of preparation, which will be needed not only as we transition models but transition into operating school with social distancing restrictions.
3. **Allergy Management Protocols:** Chartwells is committed to wellness and will provide a registered dietitian, classroom nutrition if desired, promotion of Nutrislice an electronic menu platform for students and parents, and Webtrition a USDA electronic and app based menu. Additionally, Chartwells would invest in a new point of sales system (POS) that would track each student's dietary/allergy restrictions to prevent purchase of items that would be restricted to a student's profiles based on parent/guardians submissions to the school nursing department.
4. **Financial Management:** Financially, Chartwells is providing a \$62,686 annual profit guarantee to the program (providing 180 school days with lunches served) plus a \$295,000 capital investment into our food program. As the program matures we anticipate the program to operate with revenues and profits similar to the Westport Public Schools. We have included a trailing revenue and profit and loss of the Westport Public Schools food program managed under Chartwells for comparison. Over time we anticipate this leading to revenues in excess of \$3 million annually with profits reaching \$250,000 annually. In neighboring districts, Chartwells typically generates a profit for the district of approximately \$55 per student with year over year revenue growth. These revenues are based on the success of the program and elevation of food quality and menu creation.
5. **Staffing:** Chartwells will provide to the Darien Public Schools a Director of Dining Services, Executive Chef, Administrative Support and front line staff (inclusive of Darien employees) to ensure a successful product is delivered to all students and staff each day.
6. **References:** Chartwells currently operates in school districts all over Connecticut including the following districts in Fairfield County: Westport, Weston, Ridgefield, Wilton, Easton,

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Redding, Norwalk, Stamford. All of DRG A districts currently employ Chartwells with the exception of New Canaan, who is self-operated similar to our current structure.

7. **Free & Reduced**: Chartwells is committed to treating our free and reduced lunch population in the same manner as our paid students. The investment in the new point of sale system would allow any student to move through the line without being publically flagged as free and reduced to even the cashier. This would ensure that all students are treated the same and can experience the program in the same manner.

We have enclosed a copy of the following documents provided by Chartwells:

- RFP submission
- Ready to re-open playbook
- Financial Slides and comparisons to Westport

Proposal Fundamentals: Food, People, Environment, Engagement & Financial Stewardship

Similar Partnerships

- Westport Public Schools
- Weston Public Schools
- Wilton Public Schools
- Madison Public Schools
- Ridgefield Public Schools

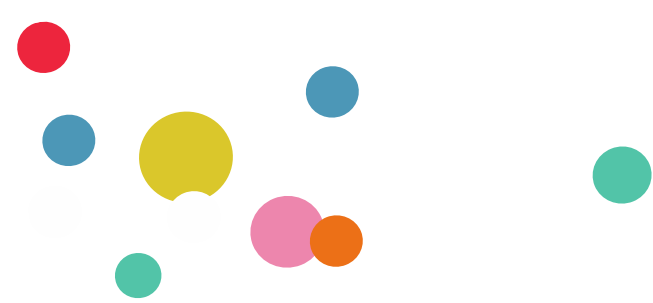
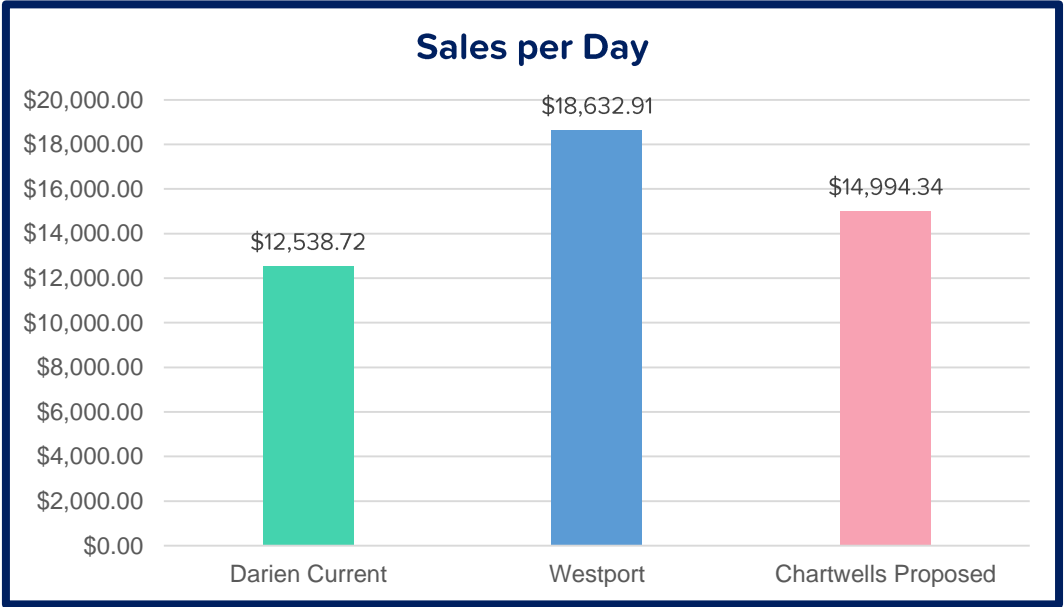
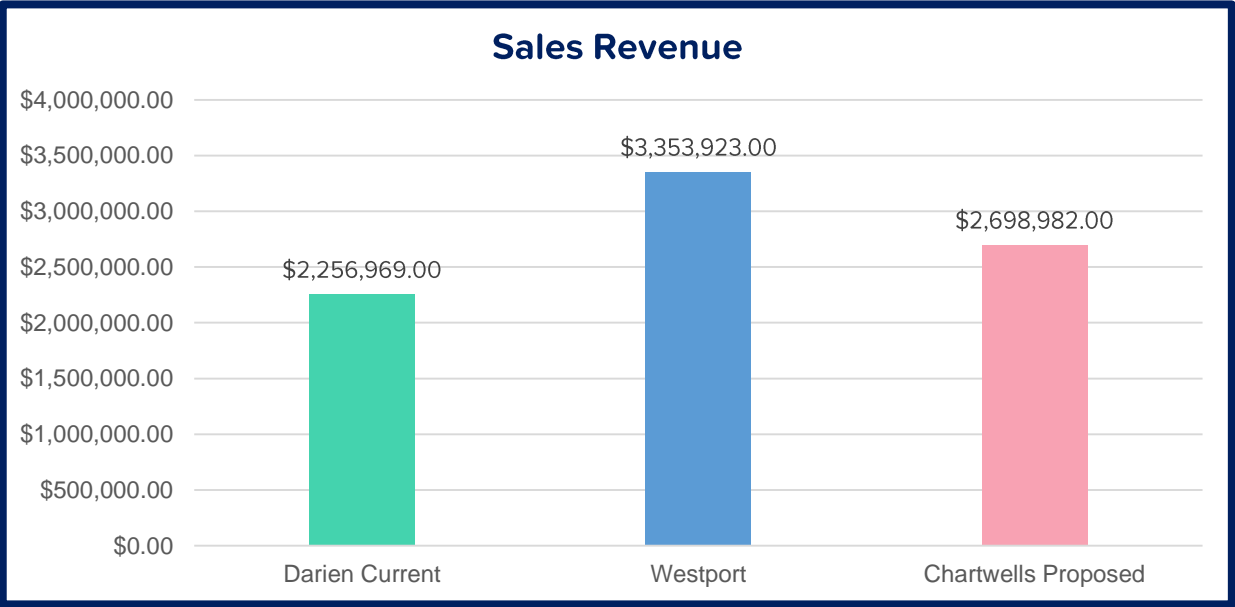
Nearby Partnerships

- Norwalk Public Schools
- Stamford Public Schools
- Easton Redding Region 9 Public Schools

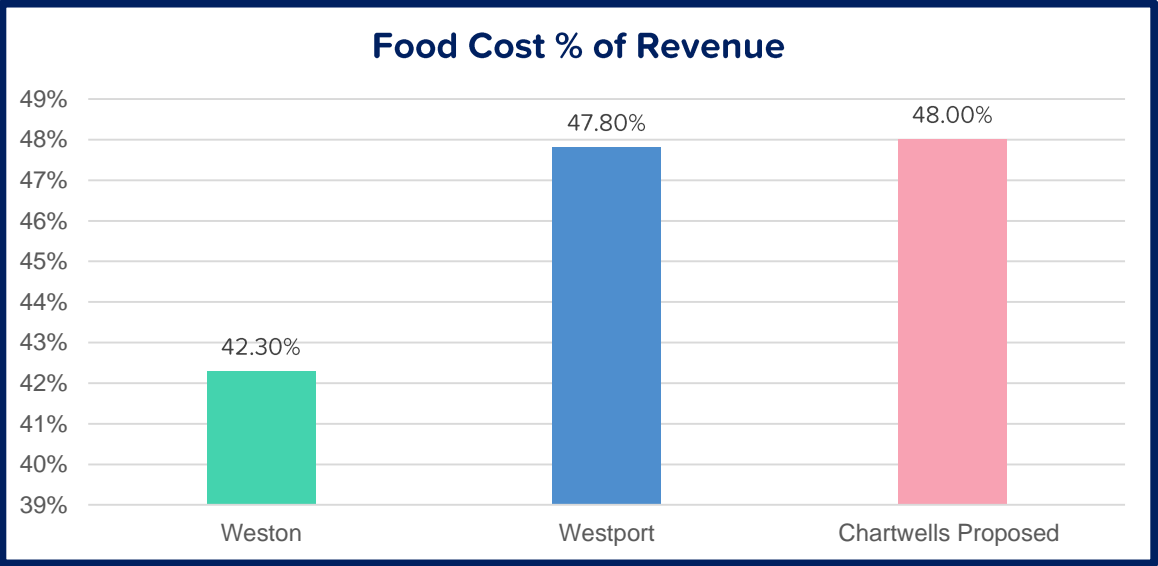
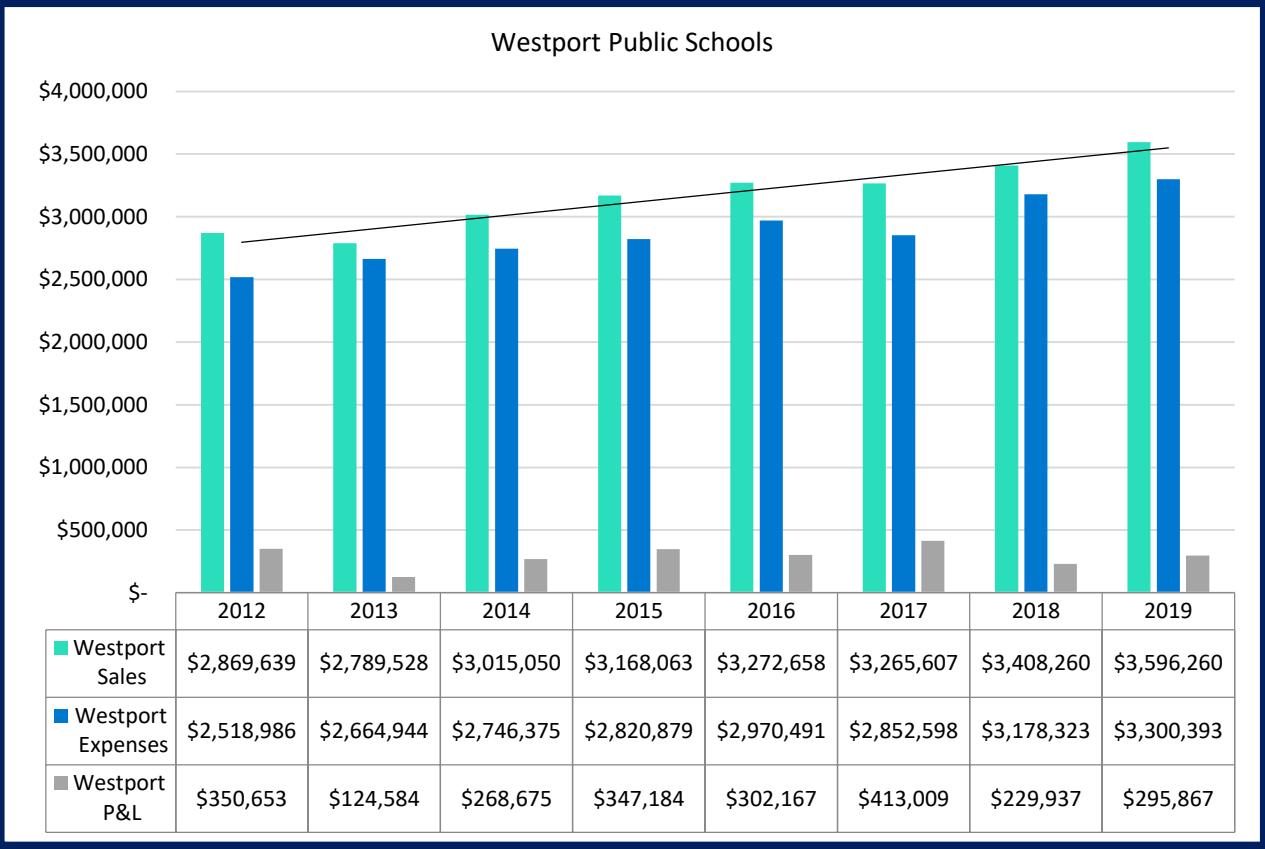
Student Per Capita Spending



Revenue & Sales per Day



Revenue Growth & Food Cost




COVID-19 Preparedness & Response


1. Leadership
2. Supply chain strength
3. Service model flexibility




Safety First and Foremost




Masks: KN95, 3 Ply, Non-woven Cloth & Face Shields




Gloves: Nitrile, Latex, Vinyl, Poly



Touch-Free Thermometers



Cleaning & Sanitizing Increased Frequency



Daily Health Screening Template

Ready to Reopen

chartwells |

Six Student Meal Service Models:

1 Classroom

2 Hallway/Alternative

3 Cafeteria


4 Off the Bus

5 Take Home


6 Home Delivery

Ready to Reopen


Digital Pre-Ordering




nutrislice



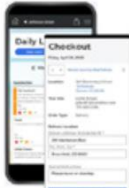
Ready to Reopen




Reducing lines in the cafeteria



Bulk ordering by classroom



Delivery




Snacks and a la carte


chartwells |

A Personalized Approach for Your School


- ✓ Phones, electronics
- ✓ Desks, tables
- ✓ Switches
- ✓ Door Handles
- ✓ Chairs
- ✓ Metal surfaces



Top of Line Disinfectants



Industry leading equipment



ATP Sensing Technology

SSC |

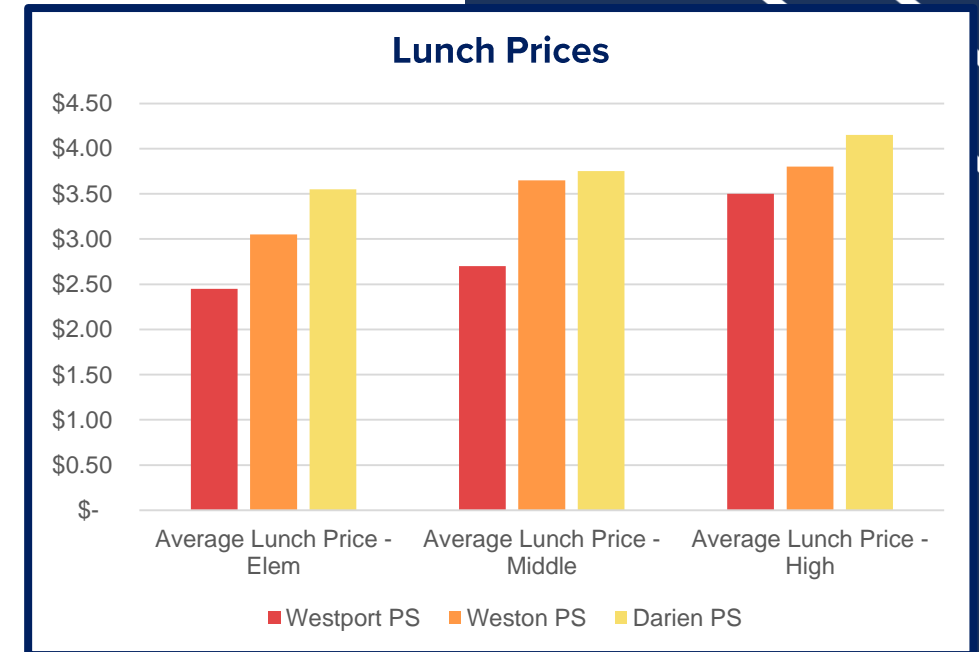
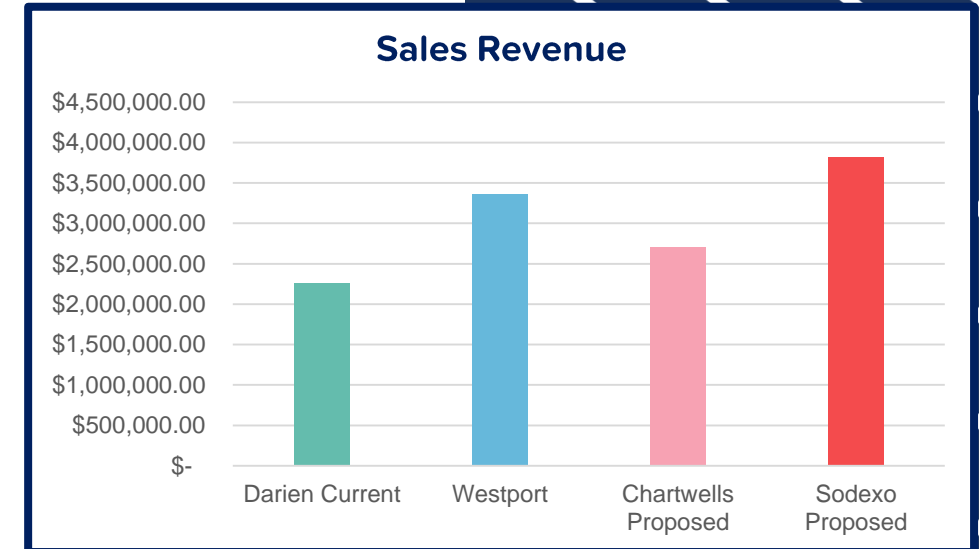
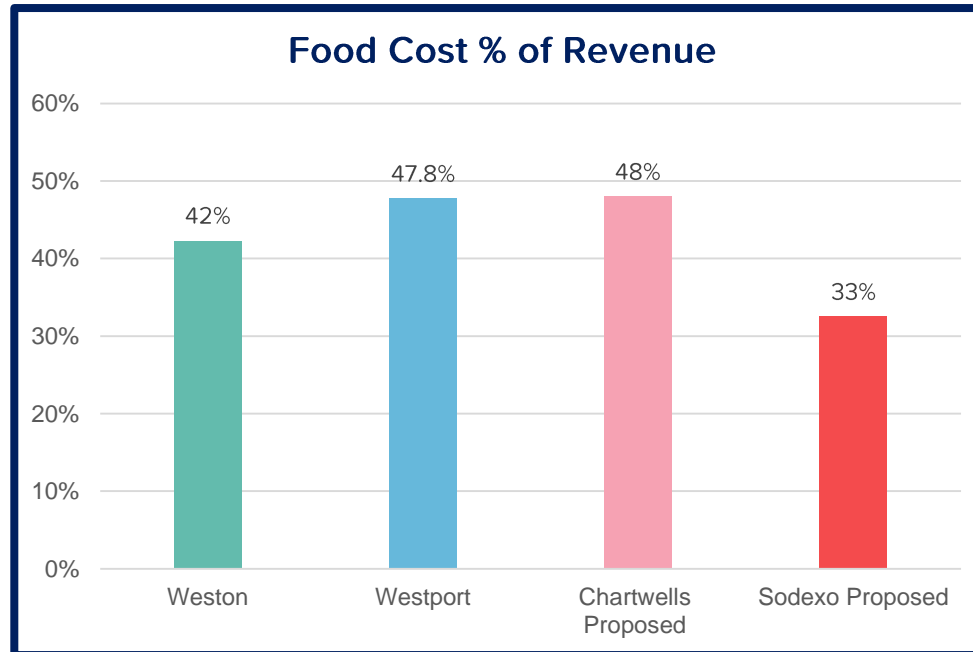
	Darien 2018/19	% of Sales	Westport 18/19 Actual	% of Sales	Chartwells Proposed Budget	% of Sales
District Sales Rev.	\$2,256,969	n/a	\$3,353,923	n/a	\$2,698,982	n/a
Student Per Capita	\$2.66	n/a	\$3.31	n/a	\$3.18	n/a
Food Cost	\$928,153	41.10%	\$1,720,699	47.80%	\$1,295,511	48%
Mgmt. Expense	\$115,957	5.10%	\$283,752	7.90%	\$263,182	9.80%
Investment	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$295,000	n/a
Total Fees	n/a	n/a	\$275,650	7.70%	\$175,000	6.50%
Profit	n/a	n/a	\$295,867	n/a	\$62,686	n/a



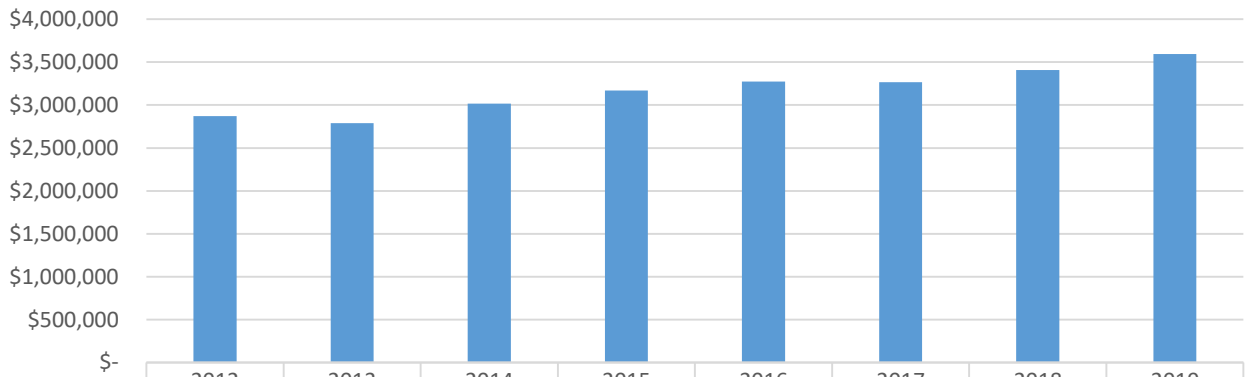


Pricing, Food Cost & Student Participation

- Pricings Impact
 - Revenue
 - Food Cost %
 - Profit
- Food Cost % of revenue
 - Student Participation



Westport Revenue



■ Westport Revenue	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
	\$2,869,639	\$2,789,528	\$3,015,050	\$3,168,063	\$3,272,658	\$3,265,607	\$3,408,260	\$3,596,260



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Assistance provided by LEAD Connecticut and the Connecticut State Department of Education

Success Strategies for Leadership Team Evaluation:

Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools

Approved by CABE and CAPSS - Spring 2016

CABE/CAPSS Evaluation Committee Members

CABE Representatives

Richard Murray, President

Donald Harris, Area 2 Director and Member of the Executive Committee

Robert Rader, Executive Director

Patrice McCarthy, Deputy Director and General Counsel

CAPSS Representatives

Frank Baran, President of CAPSS and Superintendent of Woodstock Public Schools

Alan Addley, CAPSS 1st Vice President and Superintendent Granby Public Schools

Judith Palmer, Superintendent, Region 7 Public Schools

Joseph Cirsuolo, Executive Director, CAPSS

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Preface

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) and the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) recognize the critical importance of a strong partnership between every Board of Education and its Superintendent of Schools. This recommended evaluation process collaboratively developed by CABE and CAPSS is an attempt to properly communicate our strong belief that the Board of Education and Superintendent must view themselves and function as the school district's Leadership Team. To that end, we strongly believe that the Leadership Team must share and enthusiastically advocate the same goals and a vision of learning that sets high performance expectations for the entire school community.

It is important to note that the foundational components of the recommended evaluation process are the CABE/CAPSS School Governance Position Statement, adopted March 2004 and revised in 2014, and the CABE Superintendent evaluation instrument and the Board self-assessment. THE Board of Education Chairperson, working with the Superintendent and the rest of the Board of Education, is responsible for carrying out the evaluation of the Leadership Team.

While the Board of Education and Superintendent have different roles and responsibilities, their work must complement each other. Ultimately, all serve to advance the goals and objectives of their community for public education and, most importantly, student learning. As the Board of Education's Chief Executive Officer, Connecticut Education Law (C.G.S. 10-157(a)) requires the Superintendent of Schools' job performance be evaluated annually. Whether written or oral, the annual evaluation of the school district's Chief Executive Officer is one of the most important responsibilities of every Board of Education.

CABE and CAPSS have recommended an evaluation process for the Superintendent of Schools that is collaborative, goal oriented and offers numerous opportunities for focused and targeted feedback from the Board of Education to the Superintendent of Schools regarding his/her job performance. We firmly believe that this collaborative and candid approach to evaluation will improve Board of Education and Superintendent communications and relationships, minimize evaluation surprises and most importantly, enhance the overall success of the school district.

Student achievement across all areas is important and must be assessed in multiple ways. Therefore, growth in student achievement has to be a factor in the assessment of the Superintendent's evaluations. All of the leadership performance areas and specific areas of responsibility outlined in this document should be considered. Indicators related to student academic achievement are necessary, but not sufficient to make final determinations about the Superintendent's job performance.

To increase the effectiveness of the school district's Leadership Team and the overall performance of the Board of Education and its individual members, CABE and CAPSS believe that it is vitally important that every Board of Education conducts a self-assessment each school year.

An annual self-assessment enables the Board of Education to thoughtfully and constructively evaluate its performance as the community's legislative body that develops, evaluates and oversees education policy. CABE and CAPSS strongly recommend Board of

Education self-assessment as a necessary and worthwhile activity toward advancing the vision and goals of the school district. It is important that the Board factor the Superintendent's perspective into its self-assessment.

The following is a recommended process and timeline for the annual evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education self-assessment. It is important to note that the recommended timeline is based upon a traditional evaluation year model (July-June) and can be easily as necessary. The recommended Leadership Team meetings can and should be conducted in Executive Session because they pertain to Board of Education Self-Evaluation and Personnel.

Legal Considerations: Executive Session and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

The Connecticut Freedom of Information law allows for the discussion in executive session of "personnel matters," which includes "the appointment, employment, performance, evaluation, health or dismissal of a public official or employee, provided that such individual may require that discussion be held at an open meeting" (Connecticut General Statute Section 1-200(6)). Under this provision the superintendent's evaluation, as well as the performance of one or more Board of Education members, are appropriate topics for executive session. District goals, procedures, policies and data are NOT appropriate subjects for executive session under the FOI law. All votes must be taken in public – only discussion can occur in executive session.

Note: Based on court decisions in Connecticut, written evaluation documents are likely to be deemed public records subject to disclosure. Such written evaluation documents subject to public disclosure would include any draft evaluation that is circulated among Board of Education members.

Recommended Evaluation Process

The formal evaluation should in no way preclude informal discussions between the Superintendent and Board of Education as needed.

Beginning of New Evaluation Year Meeting – July/September

Step 1: The Board conducts its self-evaluation and goal-setting.

Step 2: The district Leadership Team (Board of Education and Superintendent) meets to discuss goals and objectives. Any discussion of district goals must be held in public. This structured conversation is intended to serve as a goal/priority setting session for the district's Leadership Team for the upcoming school year.

Step 3: In Executive Session the Board of Education has an opportunity to candidly discuss with the Superintendent their performance goals for the year. Some of these will have been reflected in the most recent evaluation of the Superintendent's performance. This discussion should also include the process and format by which the Superintendent's performance will be evaluated.

-2-

Mid Year Evaluation Meeting – December / January

Step 1: The Board reviews its performance in light of previously established goals.

Step 2: It is recommended that the Leadership Team meets again in Executive Session to informally discuss their progress on goals and objectives established in July/August. This session also provides the Leadership Team with an opportunity to identify and strategize about new and/or

unexpected challenges. This level of team collaboration allows all parties to be contributing members of a fluid, responsive and strategic team.

Step 3: During this same discussion, it is recommended that the Board of Education provide targeted informal feedback to the Superintendent about his/her effectiveness vis-à-vis the previously established goals and objectives. The purpose of this informal feedback session is to assess the Superintendent's midyear performance and provide him/her with an opportunity to properly respond to any Board of Education concerns and avoid unnecessary performance evaluation "surprises" at year's end.

End of the Year Evaluation of the Superintendent – May / June

Step 1: The Superintendent shares a verbal "Year in Review" self-assessment with the Board of Education in Executive Session. This self-assessment may be supplemented by submitting documentation as a formal narrative, portfolio or some other mutually agreed upon format that was established during the Beginning of the Year Meeting, with the understanding that any such written documentation would not be confidential. This document serves as evidentiary documentation regarding the Superintendent's job performance and should aid the Board of Education in completing a comprehensive and fair evaluation of the Superintendent.

Step 2: The Board of Education conducts the evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools according to Board of Education Policy in Executive Session unless the Superintendent exercises his/her statutory right to require that such discussion be held in open session. It is recommended that there be no prior sharing of written performance evaluation commentary (hard copy or electronic) among Board of Education members prior to the Executive Session. The result of the Board of Education's Executive Session discussion regarding the Superintendent's performance should be either a written or verbal draft performance evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools.

Step 3: A meeting in Executive Session should be scheduled by the Board of Education between the Superintendent and the Board of Education, according to Board of Education Policy and Superintendent's contract. The purpose of this follow-up meeting is to share and discuss the Board of Education's draft evaluation with the Superintendent. This session serves as a final opportunity for candid discussion between the Board of Education and the Superintendent prior to the completion of the formal performance evaluation. The Connecticut Superintendent Leadership Competency Framework, developed by LEAD Connecticut, also should be examined as it is intended to focus specifically on effective superintendent leadership. It is included at the end of this document.

Step 4: The formal performance evaluation is completed and presented either verbally or in writing to the Superintendent of Schools by a representative(s) of the Board of Education according to Board of Education Policy and Superintendent's contract. It is important to note that if the Board of Education's performance evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools is in writing, it is a public document and subject to FOIA. Any written copy of the Superintendent's performance evaluation must also be placed in the Superintendent's official personnel file.

Recommended Evaluation Process and Timeline Flowchart

Beginning of New Evaluation Year Meeting July / September (Meeting to be conducted in executive session)	
Step 1:	Board Self-Evaluation and Goal Setting
Step 2:	Leadership Team Goal / Priority Setting.
Step 3:	Superintendent's Professional Goals and Objectives.
Mid-Year Evaluation Meeting December / January (Conducted in executive session)	
Step 1:	Board Reviews Its Performance
Step 2:	Informal Leadership Team discussion regarding progress on goals and objectives.
Step 3:	Targeted informal feedback provided to Superintendent regarding his/her performance.
End of Year Evaluation of the Superintendent May / June	
Step 1:	Superintendent presents "year in review" self-assessment to Board of Education regarding his/her performance.
Step 2:	Board of Education evaluates the Superintendent's job performance. A draft evaluation is developed during this meeting in districts where a written evaluation of the Superintendent is provided.
Step 3:	Meeting (in executive session) between Board of Education, as per Board of Education policy and the Superintendent, to share and discuss draft evaluation.
Step 4:	Formal evaluation is completed and presented to the Superintendent of School by a representative(s) of the Board of Education as per policy.
Note: Superintendent's Evaluation is a public document subject to FOIA.	

I. Growth in Student Achievement

Definition: The core mission of all school districts is to ensure growth in achievement for all students. While the superintendent does not deliver instruction directly to children, the superintendent has to establish a set of expectations and take other specific actions that produce a culture and a climate that fosters growth in student achievement.

Areas of Responsibility:

- Establishes a system whereby data is collected on a regular basis regarding student achievement in all curricular areas and whereby that data is used to identify areas of instruction in which focus and emphasis needs to occur.
- Establishes a structure whereby plans for growth in student achievement are set and then, regularly revised in accordance with the relevant data regarding student achievement.
- Establishes a structure whereby staff is held accountable for implementing the plans to enhance student achievement and for the intended growth in student achievement.
- Establishes assessable goals for determining whether achievement growth strategies are successful and methods for conducting the relevant assessments.
- In concert with the Board of Education, establishes assessable school system goals for yearly performance in student achievement and methods for conducting the relevant assessments.
- In concert with the Board of Education, establishes reasonable assessable goals within the context of available resources and Board support for the Superintendent's proposals for the superintendent's own performance with respect to:
 - The extent to which the superintendent has provided the leadership required to enhance student achievement by meeting the areas of responsibility listed above.
 - The extent to which the school system has met the established system goals for student achievement.

II. Educational Leadership

Definition: Educational leadership is grounded in relationships: working with the Board of Education, community and staff to define a comprehensive vision for the schools; identifying the values and ethics under which the schools function; creating a culture and climate that nurtures and capitalizes on talents and skills; setting high performance expectations for students and staff; and continuing to sustain and improve quality research-based programs to enhance teaching and learning.

Areas of Responsibility:

- Works with the Board of Education, staff and community to develop and implement a vision for the school system that inspires action and commitment and aligns with the values and ethics under which the district functions.
- Works with the board of education to develop and implement a plan of action and a strategic operating plan that aligns with a theory of action.*
- Promotes a school culture and climate of continuous improvement and accountability.
- Builds capacity by designing and implementing comprehensive professional development plans for staff.
- Establishes structures and processes that sustain a culture and climate of continuous improvement.
- Provides instructional leadership in the areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment, evaluation of staff and data informed decision making to optimize learning for all students.

*A theory of action identifies a specific set of actions that if taken will result in a specified outcome that is grounded in a vision of learning.

III. Organizational Management

Definition: Organizational management concerns the effective facilitation of the day-to-day operations of the school district and its programs.

Areas of Responsibility:

- Develops and manages a comprehensive approach to human capital that aligns to district vision, strategies and goals consistent with Board of Education policy, recruiting, hiring and retaining personnel for the district and includes a system of support, supervision and consistent evaluation.
- Develops and manages a comprehensive approach to fiscal resources that align to district vision, strategies and goals for consideration by the Board of Education (BOE).
- Reports regularly to the BOE on the status of the budget and any other fiscal concerns or issues.
- Develops and executes effective plans, procedures, routines and operational systems that support the day to day operations of the district.
- Assists the BOE in developing policies and establishes regulations to implement the policies.

IV. Community Relations

Definition: Strong community relations are critical to the success of the superintendent and the school system. The superintendent must earn respect and trust from the community and in turn, respect community members.

Areas of Responsibility:

- Continuously communicates and collaborates with families and community, regional and state stakeholders to support student learning and development at home, school and in the community.
- Addresses family and community concerns in an equitable, effective and efficient manner.
- Represents effectively the district to the local community.

V. Board of Education Relations

Definition: A strong relationship with the Board is critical to the success of the superintendent and the school system. The superintendent must earn respect and trust from the Board and in turn, respect Board members.

- Builds trusting, collaborative and respectful relationships with Board members.
- Provides professional advice and keeps the BOE informed and updated on educational issues and the needs and operations of the school system.
- Keeps BOE members informed about significant operational issues in a timely manner.

VI. Personal and Professional Qualities and Relationships

Definition: Personal and professional qualities and relationships are critical to the effectiveness of leaders and managers. Superintendents must continue to refine and develop their skills and contemporary knowledge; lead ethically and make decisions based on sound professional practice; interact in a manner that best represents the interests of the school district; and maintain a healthy balance between professional obligations and personal life.

Areas of Responsibility:

Demonstrates:

- A belief that every student can achieve at high levels.
- An urgency to improve student achievement.
- The ability to manage resistance to change and to engage in difficult conversations to maintain a consistent focus on high levels of achievement.
- The ability to explore how identity and life experiences shape assumptions and unconscious biases.
- The ability to work with diverse people and be sensitive to cultural differences.
- The ability to build trusting, respectful relationships to improve student learning.

- The ability to interact effectively with individuals and groups both within and outside the school district to accomplish the goals of the district.
- The ability to use consensus building and negotiation strategies and conflict resolution skills to lead authentic stakeholder engagement.
- Provides for a safe and orderly work environment.
- Delegates authority appropriately.
- Gives staff sufficient authority and support.
- Establishes an effective professional development system for staff that is aligned with its responsibilities for teaching and learning.
- Communicates effectively with staff regarding district goals, objectives and issues.
- Political savvy and respectful engagement across all stake holder groups.
- Effectively anticipates and responds to challenges and remains focused on the vision of high expectations when faced with adversity.
- Builds trusting, respectful relationships to improve student learning.
- Maintains high standards of ethics, honesty and integrity in all professional matters.
- Maintains poise and exhibits diplomacy in the full range of his/her professional activities.
- Is a strong advocate for public education and demonstrates the courage to support his/her convictions.

Check the most appropriate rating box on a scale of 5-1 (5 representing the highest rating, 1 the lowest) for each question. A "NA" rating is also provided if you are unable to rate on an item for any reason. A space for comments is also provided on page 11 and 12.

Vision	5	4	3	2	1	Not sure
1. The Board has a vision/mission for the school district with a primary focus on student achievement.						
2. The vision/mission and goals are developed collaboratively with staff and the community.						
3. The Board institutes a process for long-range and strategic planning that aligns with the vision/mission for the district.						
4. The Board uses the district policy manual to create a culture that supports the vision and goals of the district.						
5. The Board expresses in the vision/mission the belief that high quality instruction in every classroom is the foundation for high achievement for all students.						
6. The Board communicates clearly the goals and expectations for the district, staff, and students with an emphasis on high achievement for all students in the district.						
7. The Board develops goals that align with the vision/mission for the district, foster continuous improvement and remain the highest priorities.						
Total Vision						
Community Leadership						
8. The Board communicates and interprets the school district's vision/mission to the public and listens, and incorporates appropriate community perspectives into board actions.						
9. The Board works to promote the accomplishments of the district within the district and community at large.						
10. The Board advocates at the national, state and local levels for students and the school district and promotes the benefits of public education.						
11. The Board collaborates with other school boards, superintendents, agencies, and other bodies to inform federal, state and local policy makers of concerns and issues related to education.						
12. The Board provides community leadership on educational issues by creating strong linkages with appropriate organizations, agencies, and other groups to provide for healthy development and high achievement for all students.						
Total Community Leadership						

Check the most appropriate rating box on a scale of 5-1 (5 representing the highest rating, 1 the lowest) for each question. A “NA” rating is also provided if you are unable to rate on an item for any reason. A space for comments is also provided on page 11 and 12.

Board Operations	5	4	3	2	1	Not sure
13. The Board ensures the District policy manual is up-to-date and comprehensive.						
14. The Board conducts meetings that are efficient, effective and focus primarily on student achievement and other district priorities.						
15. The Board makes decisions based on analysis of relevant research and data.						
16. The Board adopts a fiscally responsible budget based on the district's priorities and regularly monitors the fiscal health of the district.						
17. The Board collectively executes its legal responsibilities and ensures the district adheres to all federal and state laws and board policies.						
18. The Board provides appropriate support (including quality professional development) for programs and initiatives consistent with the vision/mission of the district.						
19. The Board conducts a comprehensive orientation to familiarize new board members with their role on the team.						
20. The Board conducts an effective annual self-evaluation.						
21. The Board participates in professional development specifically regarding its roles and responsibilities and on relevant content areas.						
22. The Board belongs to, actively supports and participates in professional organizations.						
Total – Board Operations						
Board Ethics	5	4	3	2	1	Not sure
23. The Board establishes a <i>Code of Ethics</i> and conducts business in accordance with the code.						
24. The Board members maintain confidentiality regarding sensitive communications.						
25. The Board members honors board decisions even when the vote is not unanimous,						
26. The Board does not let politics interfere with district business.						
27. The Board deals with both internal and external conflicts openly, honestly and respectfully.						
Total Board Ethics						

Check the most appropriate rating box on a scale of 5-1 (5 representing the highest rating, 1 the lowest) for each question. A “NA” rating is also provided if you are unable to rate on an item for any reason. A space for comments is also provided on page 11 and 12.

Board Superintendent Team	5	4	3	2	1	Not sure
28. The Board works effectively with the Superintendent as a collaborative leadership team to focus priorities around high achievement for all students in the district.						
29. The Board sets aside time, at least semi-annually, to discuss board/superintendent relations.						
30. The Board demonstrates support and respect for the Superintendent’s role as the chief executive officer of the district.						
31. The Board provides direction to the Superintendent as a whole, not from individual Board members.						
32. The Board follows the chain of command as identified by board policy.						
Total – Board Superintendent Team						
Grand Total						
Average						

Please add any additional comments here (comments will be shared with participants):

Vision:

Community Leadership:

Board Operations:

Board Ethics:

Board/Superintendent Relations:

General Comments:

Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together

June 29, 2020



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The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and members of the State Board of Education would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to this document. This work reflects the input of classroom teachers, school counselors, principals, superintendents, parents, students, and facilities leaders across the state of the Connecticut. Their input was instrumental in the development of this document. Specifically, we would like to extend our appreciation to:

- The voices of thousands of parents and students who participated in surveys
- Connecticut PK–12 Reopen Committee
- Reopen Regional Advisory Teams
- Learn from Home Task Force
- Office of the Governor
- Connecticut Office of Policy and Management
- Connecticut Department of Public Health
- Connecticut Office of Early Childhood Education

Additionally, the leadership of the CSDE would like to acknowledge the incredible work of the entire department staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. The creation of the materials compiled in this document would not have been possible without the contributions of each member of the CSDE team. We also recognize that this pandemic will forever change the way public education looks in our state and across the nation. The success of our districts going forward will depend directly on the work of our dedicated leaders and staff.

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2. Foreword

It has been 100 years since educational, public health, and governmental leaders have had to grapple with the challenges we are facing today, and have been facing for the last several months. When the effects of the pandemic required that schools across Connecticut cancel in-school classes during March, it took moments to realize that education in Connecticut would be forever changed. Connecticut has long been focused on providing all students with equity and excellence in education, and this pandemic has forced us to further focus on the inequalities that still exist within our system and to begin to address them with renewed fidelity.

For the last several months, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has been working hand in hand with the Office of the Governor, educational stakeholders, and philanthropic leaders to identify the technological needs of students across our state, and we've begun to address the issues of device access and internet connectivity. Eliminating those obstacles will bring us one step closer to leveling the playing field for all of our students in the event that we find ourselves in a similar remote learning situation in the future.

Similarly, access to universal high quality online curriculum has also been a barrier for our students in under-resourced districts. We recognize that in order to create future-ready learning environments, teachers, students, and families require access to high quality, high impact resources and curricular materials. Beginning June 30, 2020, the CSDE will launch the CT Learning Hub. This will be a place for universal access to curated high-quality, high-impact online learning content for math, English language arts, science, social studies, the arts, physical education and more anytime, anywhere. The CT Learning Hub is a free and interactive webpage of digital resources to support online and offline learning that will provide one more component to achieving true equity for our learners whether they are inside or outside of the classroom.

We must work together towards a collective goal to ensure that our students have highly effective and innovative instructional plans whether in school, in a hybrid environment, or through remote learning. Instruction must remain student-focused, flexible, and take advantage of the strengths of our communities, families, students, and teachers.

The thought of returning to schools is daunting for many teachers, students and parents alike. A fear of the unknown is natural. The CSDE has engaged repeatedly with state and local educational and public health experts to craft the following plan, keeping both the educational and public health needs of our students and educators in mind. We realize that going back to school will not look exactly the same in every schoolhouse across the state. Districts will be operating within their community and school buildings' unique circumstances. As such, this plan provides districts with a roadmap — guardrails to operate within - while allowing districts some flexibilities to create reopen plans that will most effectively serve their unique communities.

This document is intended to be a fluid document that will evolve based on the public health data trends as well as the understanding of the best way to mitigate spread. As we proceed toward the fall, we will continue to receive input from our educational partners, students, and families and will continue to work toward providing the best opportunities for our greatest resource—the students in the State of Connecticut.

In Partnership,



Miguel A. Cardona, Ed. D.
Commissioner of Education

3. Introduction

Guiding Principles

The following document is provided for local educational agencies (LEAs) as they begin planning for the fall. Because experts are continuing to learn more about COVID-19 and the conditions surrounding the pandemic are continually changing, this preliminary guidance will likely evolve and be amended or supplemented. Individualized considerations based upon unique circumstances in each school district may also be needed. Each LEA should use this document as a guide and consult with all relevant stakeholders to determine the best way to proceed consistent with the requirements.

As Connecticut schools plan to reopen, the guidance and considerations outlined in this document are grounded in six guiding principles:

1. Safeguarding the health and safety of students and staff;
2. Allowing *all* students the opportunity to return to school *full time* starting in the fall;
3. Monitoring the school, students, and staff and, when necessary, potentially canceling classes in the future to appropriately contain COVID-19 spread;
4. Emphasizing equity, access, and support to the students and communities that are emerging from this historic disruption;
5. Fostering strong two-way communication with partners such as families, educators, and staff; and
6. Factoring into decisions about reopening the challenges to the physical safety, social-emotional well-being, and the mental health needs of our students when they are not in school.

LEAs should enter into planning understanding that health developments may influence decisions to transition to a different instructional model.

Specifically, LEAs must balance their planning with contingency plans to provide robust blended learning or remote blended learning for all grades in the event that a school, district, or region has to cancel or limit in-person classes due to health precautions. Guidance on standards for quality blended learning is being developed and will be available on the CSDE website.

While the guiding principles of this document will require all LEAs to approach this with a certain level of consistency, LEAs retain discretion in implementing the approach to full time reopening. School boards are encouraged to develop local teams and secure input from all members of the community regarding the complex approach to resuming classes in the fall. The CSDE will stand ready to provide technical support and anticipates that this document will be followed by ongoing support documents, resources, and a variety of templates to assist local planning.

Equity

“What if we use this time to re-purpose our leadership structures to build our leadership muscle to be strategic equity leaders instead of reactive leaders. Strategic equity leaders identify education challenges through an equity lens and engage others in collaborative inquiry to figure out what to do to address the challenges. Strategic equity leaders build the competencies of others to interrupt status quo ways of doing things that perpetuate inequities...”

— Vasquez, [The National Equity Project](#)

During the fall of 2019, Connecticut education leaders representing the CSDE, the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), and the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) issued a joint statement due to a number of high profile acts of racism and anti-Semitism involving students in Connecticut schools. That statement emphasized our mutual commitment to providing all students with school environments “where they do not feel threatened regardless of their race, gender, gender identity or expression, religion, nationality, status of citizenship, or sexual orientation. It is our core responsibility as educators to do everything we can to foster environments that ensure equity, diversity and inclusion.”

The return to school is being contemplated amidst a global pandemic and national demonstrations generated by the recent, yet too familiar, acts of racial and social injustice against communities of color. In the midst of this crisis, our students, educators, families, and communities are searching for the way forward. It is critically important that we deeply examine policies, practices, and pedagogy through a culturally responsive and racial equity lens. Further, inequities such as access to devices/technology, access to high quality curriculum, access to social-emotional and mental health supports, and issues of exclusionary discipline must be addressed.

In the voice of a student:

“Attention toward Mental Health — We are all experiencing one trauma together, instead of just forcing us through it, talk about it with openness. So many students are struggling, and so few are saying things. Have people check in on them, have someone reach out. A lot of students need it.”

(Connecticut Student ThoughtExchange June 2020)

Educators need to be self-reflective so we are not blind to discrimination, inequity, racism, implicit bias, and white privilege. Only by addressing these issues head-on, providing professional learning for all staff, explicit engagement of students and families, and having courageous conversations, will we make positive progress and create truly equitable schools.

The CSDE along with our partnering educational organizations throughout the state will continue to provide extensive resources, guidance, and support to LEAs in their work to reduce the negative effects of inequity and to assert our roles as equity leaders. Our students and their families deserve our commitment. While resources alone will not change personal attitudes, which is necessary to accomplish these goals, we must continue to learn together to forge our way forward.

Key

How to Use this Document

Each section contains three main components:

Introduction, if applicable



Requirements are defined as elements that the Office of the Governor, the CSDE, and/or the Connecticut State Department of Public Health have identified as necessary for the LEA to complete or comply with in order to open schools successfully in the fall.



Guidance is defined as considerations put forth by the CSDE or referenced entity rooted in best practice, experience, and research that will aid in the successful reopening of schools in the fall.

This document reflects preliminary guidance and considerations as of the date published, and should not be interpreted as mandates, except where there is indication of a requirement. This is a working document that may be revised as public health conditions evolve.

4. Priorities

The chart below addresses the priority requirements and considerations based upon questions and feedback received to date. These issues are addressed in more depth further in this document.

Fall Reopening Model

LEAs should plan to have all students, in all districts, return to schoolhouses for full-time instruction at the beginning of 2020–2021, so long as public health data continues to support this model. This model will be supported with more intensive mitigation strategies and specific monitoring, containment and class cancellation plans.

In addition to full-time instruction plans as indicated above, LEAs must be prepared to modify their plans to support a partial reopening or to allow for scaling back at a future date if the public health data changes.

Priorities:

Operational Model:

- Prepare to initiate in-school instruction accessible to the full student population.
- Plan for educational opportunities to be primarily in-person, but allow for students and parents to choose not to participate based upon individual considerations.
- Establish a continuum of strategies for implementation of in-person schooling that anticipates potential alternative programs and robust blended learning if future public health data requires class cancellations. This will require engagement of contingent plans for blended learning, including but not limited to a mix of remote blended learning, synchronous and asynchronous class meetings, and other educator and staff outreach to students. Remote learning is defined as situations where students and educators are not physically present in a traditional classroom environment, and where instruction is relayed through technology, e.g., learning management systems.

Equity:

- Identify gaps and develop action plans for reopening that specifically address inclusion, equity, and access for all learners with strategies and clearly defined action steps.

Cohorts:

- Emphasize grouping students by the same class/group of students and teacher (into a cohort) so each team functions independently as much as possible.
- Consider this methodology by grade levels. Placing students in cohorts is strongly encouraged for grades K–8, and encouraged where feasible for grades 9–12.

Facilities:

- Prioritize collection of data from families to confirm the intent to participate, as that may affect facilities and operations planning.
- Review building space and reconfigure available classroom space, such as gymnasiums and auditoriums, to maximize social distancing, consistent with public health guidelines in place at that time.
- Review community and municipal spaces with local stakeholders to determine additional capacity and availability if school building space is inadequate. Technical support will be available as needed.

Transportation:

- Plan for buses to operate close to capacity with heightened health and safety protocols, including requiring all students and operators wearing face coverings. Plans must be developed to activate increased social distancing protocols based upon community spread.

Health and Safety Policies and Protocols:

- Expect all students and staff to wear a protective face covering or face mask that completely covers the nose and mouth when inside the school building, allowing for certain exceptions.

Monitoring, Containment, and Class Cancellations Plan

- Develop robust monitoring and containment protocols, and class cancellation plans, in the event there are public health indicators that may require temporary closure of the building, such as evidence of community transmission in the school.
- If public health data requires partial reopening, or if schools' containment efforts require partial closure, prioritize the return of vulnerable learner groups, with specific protocols to increase the in-school population over time until full in person instruction is achieved.

Fall Reopening Model

In assessing the approach to a required operating model, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) considered input from school representatives, educators, families and students, educational stakeholders, advocacy organizations, and union representatives, and conducted a review of nationally and globally published school reopening plans for the 2020–2021 school year.

Due to positive containment efforts in Connecticut, reopening schools in person can be successfully achieved based upon current data. Connecticut has determined it is appropriate to plan a consistent approach to the operating model, but be prepared to modify plans as necessary. Ultimately, the importance of access to in-person schooling rose as a priority related to educational opportunities, student safety and well-being, and social-emotional learning. Maximizing in-person instructional time after the current period of disruption is critical. However, given the uncertainty planning for reopening months from now, schools must be prepared to modify their reopening model to support a partial reopening if the public health data changes.

LEAs made strong and often very successful efforts at safeguarding students' social-emotional learning opportunities, and emotional safety during the spring of 2020 when in-person classes were canceled. Nonetheless, isolation outside of the schoolhouse is not ideal for students over

longer periods of time. For different age groups, multiple variables support the need for full-time education in school. In some cases, physical safety and access to basic needs such as food, supervision, and shelter are also strong factors in opening schools to students in the fall.

Another top priority that supports a full-time in-school model is to ensure equitable access to education, and mitigating any barriers to education or opportunity gaps that increased during the pandemic. Efforts to support equity, close the opportunity gap, and provide a wide range of support for students in the state is best achieved with in-person schooling opportunities for all ages.

As noted herein, however, structuring a statewide approach to the operating model and scheduling will only be successful when implemented in conjunction with a strong monitoring and containment strategy, which may ultimately result in schools, districts, or regions making individualized decisions in response to specific student/staff diagnoses, or changing public health data in a particular school or region. The CSDE and Department of Public Health (DPH) understand the importance of consistent decision-making should public health data require either modification of the reopening model, or that in the future students return to remote learning. Therefore, LEAs should expect forthcoming guidance from DPH to establish a tiered system to guide decision-making if additional public health and safety restrictions are required.

Temporarily Choosing Not to Participate



Requirements

- Plan for parents and students who may temporarily choose not to participate in the return to school. There are defined requirements when participation of a student in the schoolhouse is limited due to a verified medical reason. However, parents and guardians may also voluntarily choose for students to temporarily engage in learning from home for a variety of other reasons. LEAs should develop temporary support options for students who continue remote learning from home, including but not limited to offering families the robust educational support options outlined in [Academics on page 28](#). In developing these plans, options include but are not limited to:
 - Consider how retired teachers and/or teachers who voluntarily identify as “high risk” or otherwise need to be accommodated outside of the school house may support operational needs via remote learning, including but not limited to the following:
 - Working with students (virtually) who are unable to attend school;
 - Developing and implementing district professional development (PD) (virtual or in person);
 - Assisting with continued PD to train teachers who need assistance with best practices for virtual teaching and learning. [See also Staffing and Personnel, page 44.](#)
 - Serving as online tutors for those who need additional assistance.
- CSDE, in consultation with stakeholders, will continue to support LEAs in developing options for students and families choosing not to participate, including by issuing future guidance.

School Liaison, Communications Plans, and Data Collection

Having a central contact and effective communications plan will be important for schools to perform effective outreach to stakeholders, families, staff, advocates, and other community partners. Schools should plan active communication before and during reopening, and cover a variety of topics, including but not limited to, COVID-19 related cleaning and hygiene protocols, prevention action items, and distribution of information if there is a need to cancel classes in whole or in part. This should include feedback from the school community, particularly as you begin implementation of different policies and protocols. A variety of communication resources related to COVID-19 are available on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) website](#).



Requirements

School Liaison:

- Designate an employee to serve as a COVID-19 Health and Safety Compliance Liaison. This designated person will be responsible for engaging with students, parents, faculty, staff, and administrators to answer questions or concerns about health and safety requirements regarding COVID-19 concerns (e.g., school nurse). All school staff and families should know and have the contact information for the designee. This role can be assigned to an administrator or someone with the authority to address compliance issues.

Communications Plan:

- Put systems in place to communicate the most up to date policies and protocols related to the considerations herein, for staff, students, and families. Schools should leverage multiple communication methods (mail, e-mail, phone calls, text messaging, social media, LEA and school websites). Ensure all policies and protocols are clearly marked with version and date, as they may change over time. Consider a COVID-19 landing page in which communication and guidance can be updated regularly.
- Make communications plans available in relevant languages of families in the community, as well as accessible to those with visual and/or hearing impairments.
- Ensure the development of plans for ongoing two-way communication with the school community (staff, families, and students) about any new policies and/or protocols *prior* to reopening, any time there is a significant policy change, and upon re-entry if a school closes temporarily during the year. This should include feedback and consultation regarding the implementation of those policies.
- Develop expectations around frequency of communication, and ensure detailed updates are provided any time critical information regarding policies, protocols, or health data changes.
- Put in place a plan for how the community will be notified of any changed policies, need to cancel classes, or other changes or restrictions. [See also Cancellation of Classes, Remote Learning, and Reopening Plan, page 24.](#)
- Make plans easily accessible, including but not limited to being visible on the main landing page of the LEA and school websites.
- Ensure these baseline requirements related to communication are the overarching principles applied to other communication plans referenced in this document.

Data Collection:

- Prioritize gathering information from families prior to reopening. Collect information from families to properly plan for resuming classes in the fall. For example, assess whether certain families will choose not to participate and instead continue with remote learning, and, if so, how that may affect facilities and operations planning.

5. Operations Plan

Before July 24, 2020, LEAs and all school operators, including but not limited to choice programs, charter schools, and endowed academies will be expected to submit a plan to the CSDE addressing the requirements outlined in this document. Connecticut Unified School District 1 (USD #1) and Unified School District (USD #2), provide unique programming including classes in residential settings, and measures necessary to protect the health and safety of students and staff in these districts may require flexibility of these guidelines, and working strategically with the CSDE and DPH related to submission of these plans. While the CSDE will not approve such plans, they will be retained and best practices communicated and will allow CSDE to provide technical support for those LEAs who require it. School administrators should work closely in consultation with local health officials and municipalities to develop appropriate plans that comply with the current public health guidance.

[The Connecticut LEA School Reopening Template](#) is provided here as a compilation of the critical requirements identified within this document needing to be addressed for each local educational agency (LEA) or school operator in submitting their reopening plan.

Facilities

Classroom Layout



Requirements

- Maximize social distancing between student workstations, achieving 6 feet when feasible, when determining the classroom layout. Desks should face in the same direction (rather than facing each other), or students should sit on only one side of tables, spaced apart.
- Where necessary, assess other space that may be repurposed for instruction in the school, in municipal or other community space, or if the school will require additional modular space.
- Maximize space between the teacher and students due to the risk of increased droplets from teachers during instruction. If a teacher removes face covering or mask during instruction, spacing should be increased beyond six feet. For teachers who stay seated, a physical barrier may be an effective option.



Guidance

- Determine the exact student-to-teacher ratio based upon individual student needs and available space. Both students and additional support professionals should be considered when assessing the appropriate density for a room.
- Install floor markings to illustrate social/physical distancing.
- Use outdoor instruction where health and safety conditions and physical space allow, considering, for example, allergies and/or asthma symptoms.
- Ensure the classroom cohort will have access to washing stations, and if necessary, plan for temporary washing stations or hand sanitizer dispensers.

Reopening of Facilities Before First Day of Classes



Requirements

- Comply with DPH [Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting of Schools](#) during COVID-19.
- Comply with DPH [Return to Service Guidance](#) for Building Water Systems.



Guidance

- Review floor plans, consider space, and perform any facility maintenance required.
- Ensure that every school building has a health room with running water.
- Ensure that an isolation room has been identified in every school building.
- Ensure that all [water](#) and [ventilation](#) systems are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown.
- Perform any necessary deep cleaning that may help prepare the building for students to return in-person.
- Consider allowing small cohorts to enter school prior to reopening to give them time to understand the new policies and protocols, and practice the changed routines and rules.

Signs and Messages



Requirements

- Ensure all signs and messages related to stopping the spread are accessible for students with disabilities and in languages appropriate for the school population.



Guidance

- Focus on distribution of information and regular communication about the actions school communities can take to [stop the spread](#). This includes posting [signs](#) in highly visible locations (e.g., school entrances, staff areas, and restrooms) that [promote everyday protective measures](#), and providing instruction related to [properly washing hands](#) and [properly wearing a cloth face coverings](#). Educate students about how coronavirus is spread, and how preventative actions help avoid the spread (for example, that masks keep droplets out of the air and hand hygiene keep the virus out of one's mouth/nose/eyes).
- Broadcast regular [announcements](#) related to stopping the spread on school intercoms, and ensure related resources (e.g., messages and [videos](#)) are distributed when communicating with staff, students, and families (such as on school websites, in emails, and on school [social media accounts](#)).
- Place signs near sinks reminding students and staff to wash hands before and after using the restroom.
- Find free CDC print and digital resources in several languages on CDC's [communications resources](#) main page.

Ventilation



Requirements

- Comply with DPH [Guidance for School Systems for the Operation of Central and non-Central Ventilation Systems](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Guidance

- Plan to inspect building systems regularly to ensure they are operating properly. This includes but is not limited to developing a schedule to perform preventive maintenance, remediation (including necessary filter replacements), and repairs before opening and promptly when needed.
- Refresh stale indoor air by opening windows. Consider, however, how to avoid circumstances where opening a window may pose a health threat, such as exacerbating asthma or allergy symptoms or creating fall risks for young students where the open window is accessible.

- For facilities with central ventilation systems, increase ventilation rates and increase the percentage of outdoor air that circulates into the system where possible. For facilities where a central ventilation system is not used, window air conditioning units should be adjusted to maximize fresh air intake into the system, blower fans should be set on low speed and pointed away from room occupants to the extent possible.
- Ceiling fans should be adjusted so that fins are rotating in a direction that draws air up toward the ceiling rather than down onto occupants. Window fans should be turned to exhaust air out of the window in the direction of the outdoors. Window fans that blow air into a room or free-standing fans that only serve to circulate existing air around a room should not be used.

No-Touch Usage



Guidance

- Enable no-touch usage of items such as doors, trashcans, and bathroom fixtures, where possible.
- Where no touch technologies are not available, prop open doors in accordance with fire and safety codes, and remove trash lids.

Training Related to Facilities



Requirements

- Identify the training needs of staff related to health and safety protocols; perform such training prior to the first day of classes.
- For consistency and to facilitate refresher trainings, consider designating 1-2 people in each building to serve as trainers.
- Plan an in-person or online training that includes: social distancing; cleaning protocols; and hygiene practices. Require attendance by all students and staff, and make available to families who are interested. Consider repeating this training during the first months that school reopens, and as needed.
- Ensure training is provided to substitutes or others who may enter the school outside of the first day or typical calendar start.



Guidance

- Consider having training days and days to practice new protocols with staff only prior to having students enter the building.

Bathroom Protocols



Requirements

- Comply with DPH [guidance for cleaning and disinfecting of schools](#) during COVID-19.
- Maximize use of disposable towels in lieu of hand dryers, due to ventilation considerations. Turn off and avoid use of hand dryers.



Guidance

- Review the school floorplan and consider ahead of time the best way to use, assign, and access bathrooms.
 - Identify at least one separate bathroom near the isolation room, preferably single stall, that would be used in conjunction with any individual who began experiencing symptoms while at school.
 - Plan and communicate ways to maximize social distancing in multi-stall shared bathrooms.
 - Assess ways specific bathrooms should be assigned to student cohorts, if possible.

- Increase cleaning and disinfection of bathrooms consistent with CDC [disinfecting and cleaning guidelines](#). Set up policies and protocols for bathroom use to minimize contact with surfaces.
 - Optimize ventilation and fresh air intake.
 - When consistent with fire code, privacy considerations, and health and safety requirements, consider propping doors open.
 - Place a trashcan and paper towel roll by the bathroom door to allow students and staff to use in order to prevent from touching the handle with their hands.
 - Install touch-free single-use paper towel dispensers, garbage bins, faucets, urinals, and toilets if possible.
 - Discourage storage of any personal items within the bathroom (including staff bathrooms).

Daily Operations

Flexibility and Compartmentalization of Protective Measures



Requirements

- Develop the policies and protocols related to facilities and operations with the understanding that schools may need to react quickly to changing conditions.
- Ensure options to increase, or relax restrictions are available throughout the school year to respond effectively to changes in public health data. This requires compartmentalized solutions that can be deployed or recalled in a timely and organized way. [See also Cancellation of Classes, Remote Learning, and Reopening Plan, page 24.](#)

Class Groups and Teams (Cohorts)

The purpose of cohorting is to limit the number of students who are exposed to or may be diagnosed with COVID-19 if there is community transmission in a school. Maintaining stable cohorts helps to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19.

A “cohort” is a group or team of students and educators with consistent members that stay together throughout the school day.



Guidance

- Implement the key strategy of establishing stable cohorts within the school population, when feasible. Placing students in cohorts is **strongly encouraged** for grades K–8, and **encouraged where feasible** for grades 9–12.
- Develop a system for cohorting and logging for the purposes of contact tracing, if necessary, if there are interactions between different cohorts.
- Ensure cohorts are not based upon any specific demographic or disability criteria.
- Educate students, families, and staff on the value of cohorts. Ensure they understand that other health and safety guidelines remain important to minimize the risk of infection.
- Restrict the mixing of cohorts. Pay particular attention to eating times, open periods, and study halls.
- Assign classroom groups with teams of teachers and support personnel, and as much as possible restrict mixing between teams.
- Notify families of the cohorts so that they can use that information when scheduling any activities, carpools, or other engagement outside the schoolhouse.
- When possible, have teachers of specific academic content areas rotate, instead of student groups.

- Maximize other safety precautions where cohorts may have contact, such as more closely monitored use of facial coverings, hand washing and sanitizing between cohorts.
- When assessing the best approach to restriction of mixing teams, consider eating periods, open periods, and study halls.
- Where schools have different entrances, assign cohorts a specific entry and exit that remains consistent day-to-day. Consider similar design for assignment of restrooms, classrooms, and outside space where it is possible to restrict primary use to a single cohort, or consistent group of cohorts.

Foot Traffic, Hallways, and Shared Areas



Guidance

- Limit face-to-face encounters by designating foot-traffic patterns — such as one-way hallways and staircases — and by designating entrance-only and exit-only doors, when feasible.
- Install markings on floors to illustrate foot-traffic expectations.
- Consider staggering passing in hall by changing schedules around periods to ensure students change rooms, if necessary, at different times.
- Keep traffic moving in stairways and halls.

Outside Time and Playgrounds



Guidance

- Schools should assess ways to minimize exposure from playground and fitness equipment use, including but not limited to ensuring only the team cohort uses it at the same time, hand washing before and after use or use of hand sanitizer, and disinfecting fitness equipment or other smaller outside equipment after each group of students' use.
- Consider staggering recess times for each class/cohort.
- Plan increased supervision to monitor social distancing, as appropriate.

Other Individuals Entering the School Building



Requirements

- Develop consistent policies to address when clubs, before- and after-school programs, or other voluntary groups may be allowed to use school space. Include ways to safely allow access for before- and after-school and childcare programs.



Guidance

- Consider limiting or restricting nonessential volunteers and visitors, and activities held in the school such as assemblies or larger gatherings. Have a clear policy defining essential building access for parents, such as for PPT meetings, or consider virtual meetings when possible.
- Assess how parent access to buildings can be structured to facilitate compliance with CDC and other public health recommendations.
- Plan effective ways to communicate cleaning and hygiene protocols [as recommended by the CDC](#).
- In addition to full [cleaning and disinfection](#), plan to spot-disinfect high-touch surfaces throughout the day. These surfaces include soap and paper towel dispensers, doors within toilet stalls, and toilet handles.
- Consider delaying cleaning when school is not in session such as over the weekend, when possible and particularly if there is a suspected case, to allow for passive decontamination. For example, schedule deep cleanings on weekends for Sunday, not on Friday afternoon immediately after students and staff leave.

Choice Programs



Guidance

- Consider the unique characteristics of choice programs in planning for the year, particularly since students participate from various towns and regions. Plan to work strategically with the CSDE to make plans to adhere to these guidelines while also allowing flexibility if required to facilitate the programs.

Child Nutrition



Requirements

- Schools and institutions that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack Program, and Special Milk Program (SMP) as applicable, must continue to determine eligibility for and make available free and reduced-price meals and snacks and free milk to all eligible students.
- Schools and institutions must comply with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) regulations and policies for school meals and milk including the meal pattern requirements.
- Schools and institutions that participate in the NSLP are required to claim meals/milk provided to eligible students using accurate counting and claiming methods. Additionally, the number of free and reduced-price meals served and claimed for reimbursement must have adequate documentation on file to support the claim.



Guidance

- On-site Meal Service (for students while in school):** Determine the appropriate meal distribution method(s) (i.e., Cafeteria [or alternate] Pick-up Model, Classroom Delivery Model, or a Hybrid Delivery Model) of meal service based on social distancing, physical location, student traffic, space, staffing, etc.
- Off-site Meal Service (for days students who are remote learning or for unanticipated school closures):** Determine model(s) of meal service delivery options to be implemented (i.e., Parent/student Pick-up on Remote Learning Days; Dismissal Time Distribution, and School Bus/School Vehicle Delivery).
- Simultaneous Operation of Congregate and Non-Congregate meal Service:** Assess needs around work stations, social distancing of staff, the availability of food, equipment and supplies, storage space, staffing, etc.
- Financial Considerations:** Determine the probability of increased costs to operate the school nutrition programs and the financial impact to the LEA if there is a decrease in revenue because of the inability to offer a la carte sales, catering and a potential decrease in meal counts and increases in expenses related to the costs of food, supplies and labor.
- Cleaning and Sanitation:** Work in consultation with the appropriate local health departments on updated safety protocols, including standard operating procedures for sanitation of school kitchens, cafeterias, food warehouses, alternative meal distribution locations, and central production kitchens.
- Communication with Families:** Notify parents and the school community about school meal service and options. Use a variety of communication methods such as social media, newsletters, and school websites.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Assess the need for PPE in food service operations such as masks, gloves, physical barriers in serving areas, etc.

Transportation

Providing student transportation to schools is an important legal mandate that requires ensuring that all students have access to education at school.

The CSDE will work strategically to plan for the fall with LEAs, and particularly with school choice programs, which face the additional challenges of multi-town transportation for students as plans are developed which adhere to these guidelines.

Preparation



Guidance

- Consider gathering data from families to properly plan for resuming classes in the fall, including an assessment of the number students expected to attend, and whether parents or guardians plan to transport their children.
- Consult with municipal leaders, including public safety officials, to assess the approach if the school determines parents/guardian transportation is an option, including whether the school can safely accommodate the traffic, and whether local streets will be impacted.
- Understand that parents or guardians generally cannot be compelled to transport their children if they choose not to, in which case the LEA maintains responsibility for transporting the student.
- Include all transportation providers, including public and contracted bus company representatives where applicable, in planning a return to service.

Pick Up/Drop Off



Guidance

- Assess if a staggered arrival and drop off, properly communicated, will enhance safety protocols in place.
- Plan vehicle flow and logistics particularly if there are more family transport vehicles.
- Consider arrival/departure procedures that limit unnecessary entrance of parents and guardians into the building.

Family or Guardian Transport



Guidance

- Consider ways to encourage parents and/or guardians to transport their children to schools. If parent and/or guardian transport is likely, schools should plan to safely accommodate new traffic patterns and foot traffic.
- Keep in mind the feasibility and availability of alternate transportation by parents/guardians.

Buses, Vans and Student Transportation Vehicles



Requirements

Protective strategies for bus transportation should align with the forthcoming tiered system established by DPH to assist leaders define the decision-making approach applied to individual school districts.



Safe Status

Bus transportation can operate with no restrictions.



Low Status

Bus transportation can operate up to full status with mask requirements and loading and unloading restrictions.



Moderate Status

Bus transportation can operate with seating and spacing restrictions, mask requirements, and loading and unloading restrictions.

Where either a vaccine is available or effective treatments for COVID-19 are available, bus transportation can operate as it did prior to the pandemic, with no restrictions.

Where there is low transmission risk in the community and some restrictions are in place in schools, buses will be able to operate up to full capacity. LEAs who believe they may need to operate buses at high capacity levels should prioritize assessing alternative options and increase monitoring of the mitigating strategies. Passengers will be required to wear a face mask or cloth face covering that completely covers the nose and mouth during transit. The passenger's face covering must be in place prior to boarding the bus and must be kept in place until they are completely off the bus. Passengers should load into the bus from the back row to the front (where the first passengers onto the bus sit in the back row) and then unload the bus in a controlled manner upon arrival at the school from front to back by seat. This will reduce the number of people passengers walk by as they get on the bus and will prevent crowding in the center aisle when the bus arrives for unloading.

Passenger density should be significantly reduced when there is moderate spread, because schools will be employing remote blended learning when in this status. Bus passengers should be spaced with family members sitting together and non-family members should be spaced 6 feet apart utilizing alternating diagonal seating. Passengers will be required to wear a face mask or cloth face covering that completely covers the nose and mouth during transit. The rider's face covering must be in place prior to boarding the bus and must be kept in place until they are completely off the bus. Students should load into the bus from the back row to the front (where the first passengers onto the bus sit in the back row) and then unload the bus in a controlled manner upon arrival at the school from front to back by seat. This will reduce the number of people passengers pass by as they get on the bus and will prevent crowding in the center aisle when the bus arrives for unloading.




Guidance

- Assess whether a temporary monitor on student transportation at the beginning of the school year will best facilitate successful compliance with school health policies as these new protocols are implemented, particularly for younger students.
- Provide back-up masks if students do not have face coverings when boarding the bus or van.
- Develop clear expectations for drivers and bus monitors related to face coverings and other safety measures.
 - Include a plan for instances where a student is waiting, and illustrate symptoms associated with COVID-19 that are observable to the bus operator.

- Do not allow passengers to change seats during the route.
- Plan to increase cleaning and sanitizing for all vehicles, and keep associated logs. Effectively communicate cleaning protocols to all staff, including measures to prevent harmful human exposure to chemicals.
- Magnet Schools, Charter Schools, Open-Choice Districts, and Connecticut Technical Education and Career System schools should consider the complexities of regional travel, and develop scenarios for how safe inter-district transportation will occur. Additional technical support from the CSDE will be provided for such unique transportation requirements.

Fiscal and Budgetary Considerations

The CSDE strongly encourages LEAs to work cooperatively in developing their budgets, with their local municipality and their local health departments, or in the case of regional boards of education with the participating municipalities. Regular, open lines of communication will allow  limited resources to be shifted to critical priorities in a timely fashion.

Guidance

Securing Funding and Planning:

- Develop funding scenarios to support the multiple areas that may require increased funding, including but not limited to student equipment, protective materials and cleaning supplies, increased staffing and physical changes to school buildings to enhance health and safety measures. Consider whether a regional approach will help streamline securing items.
- Maximize access to available federal funding first through application for Elementary and Secondary Education Emergency Relief funds and Coronavirus Relief funds, then through application to the local municipality for FEMA and Coronavirus Relief Funds. Guidance on accessing these funding sources is available on the CSDE's website.
- Maximize the use and braiding of current federal program funds, as permitted, for which federal waivers have been secured to support LEA priorities.

Engaging Stakeholders: Consider a proactive approach in communicating with local unions, student service contractors, including private special education providers, contractual suppliers of equipment and supplies, transportation vendors, and have contingency plans in place for contractual modifications that may be necessary during the course of the school year.

Funding Priorities: Assess how funds can best support efforts to provide equity and access to all students. As LEAs develop spending plans for the year, review and consider the [state level priorities established by the Commissioner of Education](#). This includes:

- Equitable Access to Technology:
 - Survey families to collect information about devices and connectivity in their homes to support blended learning.
 - Update policies for school-owned devices. Consider allowing broader use to address families' need for telehealth access and other state agency support if school device is the only one in the household.
 - Prepare for the possibility a student, class, or school will require robust blended learning at some time during the school year.
 - Assess if funding would be appropriate to support training adult family members more effectively in accessing Internet and digital resources used for blended learning opportunities.
 - Consult the CT Learning Hub, [See Academics, page 28](#).

- Equitable Access to High Quality Online Curriculum Including Necessary Supports
 - Use funding to support further development, in consultation with state-provided resources, of high quality online curriculum, including necessary supports.
 - Unlike the initial wave of the pandemic during spring 2020 where there was little time to prepare, schools should be well equipped to provide robust learning opportunities to students in the event additional class cancellations occur during the 2020-21 school year.
- Education Recovery and Reopening Schools
 - Ensure fiscal and budgetary planning includes support for education recovery, including but not limited to funding for staffing for extended day/afterschool remedial programming; summer school or extension of the school year; and additional instructional supplies/equipment.
- Social-Emotional Well-being
 - Review the detailed content of this document related to social-emotional learning (SEL) needs of students, staff, and the school community, and plan financial support for a heightened need.

Reserving Funds: Reserve and plan funding to support the school board's contingency plans to support students in cases of class cancellations, including but not limited to the required budgeting to provide meals, address digital access issues, engage in robust blended learning, and support SEL.

Contracting, Insurance Policies, and Internal Protocols: Assess with board counsel if contracts need revisions to align with the district's approach to reopening. Also, consider any other insurance policies, internal processes, and money-handling policies to determine if changes, additional spending controls, or available budget balancing strategies will be necessary.

6. Health Practices And Protocols

Standard Public Health Practices and Adequate Supplies



Requirements

- Ensure that students are educated and engaged in the new expectations related to all public health policies and protocols. As part of this requirement, assess the best approach to communicating the information for the age group, and plan to set aside time at the beginning of the school year, as well as frequent reminders, to review the new policies and protocols.
- Familiarize all participants of the standard public health practices used to prevent the spread of diseases. These practices include, but are not limited to:
 - social distancing,
 - frequent hand washing and use of hand sanitizer,
 - use of face coverings that completely cover the nose and mouth,
 - respiratory and cough etiquette, and
 - enhanced cleaning/disinfection of surfaces.
- Provide adequate supplies, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% ethyl alcohol or 70% isopropyl alcohol (for staff and older students who can safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, cloth face coverings (as feasible), and no-touch/foot-pedal trash cans.



Guidance

- Educate and train the school community in the standard public health practices, to help them make appropriate decisions and comply with school health policies and practices. The CDC has [more detailed information on](#) this topic. Related to schools as workplaces, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has also provided important [measures for control and prevention](#) that should be communicated to the school community.
- Provide frequent reminders to students and staff of the importance of these precautions. Consider weekly refreshers on the key public health strategies.

Immunizations and Health Assessments



Requirements

- **Immunizations:** [Guidance from the Department of Public Health was issued dated June 17, 2020](#) emphasizing the importance of protecting students by staying up to date on immunizations.
- **Health Assessments:** [Guidance from the CSDE was issued dated June 26, 2020](#) outlining the requirements for [Health Assessments](#) prior to students enrolling in school.

Reporting Illnesses and Addressing Vulnerable Populations



Requirements

Staying at Home

- Instruct students and staff to inform the school if they are sick with COVID-19 related symptoms, particularly if they had a known contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 and have also had contact with the school population. They must stay home when they are sick, especially if they have COVID-19 symptoms such as fever and cough. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has provided [guidance](#) that confirms that, during a pandemic, it is permissible to ask employees if they are experiencing symptoms of the pandemic virus (such as fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat.) Employers must maintain all information about employee or student illness as a confidential medical record.
- Develop consistent protocols for information reporting, and a point person to appropriately receive and safeguard this information, such as the school nurse, district nursing supervisor, or principal.
- Educate staff and families about when to [stay home](#). Schools should properly communicate the content of this or any updated guidance.
 - Instruct staff and students (or their parents and guardians) to perform a self-assessment prior to leaving for school to identify fever and other possible COVID-19 symptoms. Communicate this expectation and provide parents with reminders about the [symptoms consistent with COVID-19](#) that require keeping their students at home. Examples include a check-list for parents or a web-based application such as Connecticut [How We Feel](#).
- Establish and communicate school-wide sick protocols, including signs and symptoms of COVID-19, and temperature thresholds requiring students or staff to stay home.
- Consistent with the applicable laws and school policies, offer options for school and work to staff and students with special healthcare needs (e.g., remote learning options, alternate or modified job responsibilities).



Guidance

Encourage staff members and teachers with concerns about individual risk factors to talk to their healthcare provider to assess their risk for working in an environment where social distancing might be difficult to maintain.

- Review and consider revising policies and procedures related to student and employee absences to ensure that policies do not incentivize coming into school even if sick (e.g., “perfect attendance” policies).
- Work with board counsel to properly apply and communicate any applicable leaves available for employees should they become sick, or have to quarantine due to exposure to COVID-19.

Returning to School

- Follow the relevant public health guidelines in place at that time and communicate with the local public health official related to the return. Review LEA policies to ensure they are consistent with those guidelines. At present, CDC's criteria to help inform when employees should return to work includes:
 - [If they have been sick with COVID-19](#)
 - [If they have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19](#)

Social Distancing



Requirements

- In conjunction with the considerations outlined above concerning classroom and hallway social distancing rules, assist staff and students to maintain social distancing between individuals to reduce the transmission of the virus per the public health guidelines at that time.
- Be prepared to adjust the approach to social distancing if guidance from the CDC or DPH changes due to shifting public health data or evolving understanding of COVID-19 disease, including transmission.



Guidance

- Maintain the recommended social distancing to the maximum extent possible.
- Prepare in advance for times when social distancing may be particularly difficult, including but not limited to:
 - Accommodating students with special health care needs or disabilities whose learning (e.g., direct instruction) or other needs (e.g., assisting with toileting or ambulation) may require closer proximity and/or direct contact.
 - Conducting health assessments or screenings when there is a suspicion that symptoms exist or there was exposure (e.g., the school nurse listening to lung sounds).

Material Sharing



Guidance

- Develop protocols to minimize the need to have multiple students sharing high touch materials to the extent possible. Plan in advance by determining if additional supplies are necessary. These materials include, but are not limited to books, computers, calculators, writing utensils, computer keyboards/headphones, and art supplies.
- Appropriately clean, disinfect, or sanitize materials at the end of each school day, consistent with [CDC guidelines](#).

Use of Face Coverings, Masks, and Face Shields



Face Covering

A cloth, paper, or disposable face covering that covers the nose and mouth; may or may not be medical grade



Face Shield

A clear plastic shield that covers the forehead, extends below the chin, and wraps around the sides of the face



Clear Plastic Barrier

A clear plastic or solid surface that can be cleaned and sanitized often



Requirements

- Adopt policies requiring use of face coverings **for all students and staff when they are inside the school building, with certain exceptions listed below.**
 - For anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance, face coverings and masks should not be required, [per CDC guidance](#).

- For anyone who has a medical reason making it unsafe to wear a face covering, masks should not be required.
- Be prepared to provide a mask to any student or staff member who does not have one.



Guidance

- Teach and reinforce use of [cloth face coverings](#).
- Frequently remind individuals not to touch the face covering and to [wash their hands](#) frequently.
- Provide staff, students, and students' families information on [proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings](#).
- Set clear guidelines regarding limited exceptions to use of face coverings when other mitigating practices are in place, such as:
 - For students, while eating, drinking, during PE, or when students are outside, and effectively practicing social distancing and any other possible mitigants. Exceptions may also be necessary for certain special education students or other special populations.
 - For teachers and staff, while teaching so long as they are properly socially distancing or remaining static behind a physical barrier as described herein, while eating, drinking, or when outside and effectively practicing social distancing and any other possible mitigants.
- Develop a consistent policy to address mask breaks throughout the day.
- Assess when face shields may be appropriate however, face shields alone are not a sufficient alternative to the wearing of face masks for source control, but rather both should be worn for additional protection. Educate staff on the fact that face shields protect the eyes, nose, and mouth from contamination from respiratory droplets, along with masks or respirators.
 - When medically appropriate, nurses should substitute use of metered dose inhalers and spacers for students with respiratory issues.
 - If aerosol-generating procedures cannot be avoided, address the need for additional protocols, including but not limited to use of face shields and increased protective equipment by staff (such as school nurses) who are involved in these type of procedures, such as provision of oxygen via high-flow nasal cannula, nebulizer treatments, and open suctioning.
 - Face shields worn with face masks may also be used by staff who support students with special healthcare needs (who are not able to wear masks and who may need assistance with activities of daily living, such as toileting, eating).
- If medically required or where services provided pursuant to an Individualized Education Program (IEP) would require it, including but not limited to for speech and language services, evaluations, language acquisition activities, etc., students and/or staff may wear face shields and clear masks, or remove masks when face coverings/masks are not appropriate for the activity. Any other possible mitigating strategy should be implemented in these cases, including but not limited to maximum social distancing.
 - Staff working with students who are not wearing face coverings due to one of the exceptions and also cannot maintain social distancing should be provided increased protective equipment, including but not limited to medical-grade masks and disposable gowns.

7. Health Monitoring Plan

Planning and Distribution of Information



Requirements

- Include in the LEA reopening plan written protocols for monitoring of symptoms that could be related to COVID-19, with the goal of decreasing the risk of spreading or contracting the virus and maintaining oversight related to the pandemic while complying with relevant privacy and health laws.



Guidance

- Review the most updated guidance on monitoring for COVID-19 and develop protocols consistent with the applicable recommendations.
 - As of the date of this document, [CDC guidance](#) provides that schools and childcare programs are not expected to daily screen students, students, or staff to identify cases of COVID-19. If a community (or more specifically, a school) has cases of COVID-19, local health officials will help identify those individuals and follow up on next steps.
 - While daily screenings by school staff are not required, be prepared if, at the recommendation of state and local departments of public health, screenings are initiated based on local factors such as a confirmed case or known exposures, or if a staff member of student presents with obvious symptoms.

Attendance Monitoring



Guidance

- Actively monitor staff and student absenteeism and track the reasons for their absences to identify any trends that would suggest spread of illness such as COVID-19.
 - Explore the ability to code student and staff absences with specific symptom codes within programs such as PowerSchool, fever or COVID-related symptoms are examples, compared to routine sick days.
 - Create a communication system for staff and families for self-reporting of symptoms, and for families to notify the school of known or presumed cases consistent with applicable privacy and confidentiality laws. [See Reporting Illnesses and Addressing Vulnerable Populations](#) section describing EEOC guidance.
- If, due to a containment plan, a school or region must cancel classes, be prepared to engage students and address attendance during periods of blended learning. [See Academics, page 28.](#)
- In forthcoming guidance related to parents and students who choose not to participate, attendance monitoring advice will be included.

8. Containment Plan



Requirements

- Include in the LEA reopening plan written protocols for containment and immediate response if an individual has signs or symptoms of COVID-19, there is a known exposure, or a member of the school community has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19. The purpose of containment plans are to decrease the risks of spreading COVID-19, and shall include the following:
 - Immediate coordination with the local health department, including being ready to comply with requests for information from the local health department to assist with contact tracing.
 - Identification of a response team within the school and LEA with specific responsibilities.
 - Consideration of what signs and symptoms exhibited by students or staff would require their immediate dismissal from school; for what period of time; and conditions for their re-admittance to school.
- If any person who has been present in school has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, the local health department must be notified immediately.
- Identify an “isolation room” (besides the health office) to accommodate students who exhibit symptoms consistent with COVID-19 until a parent or guardian arrives. Students should remain supervised in the isolation room. For the purposes of contact tracing, schools should log all persons who entered the room. The individual supervising the room must be equipped with proper PPE.
- Initiate recommended [CDC cleaning procedures](#) following a confirmed COVID-19 case.
- Review [CDC guidance](#) to ensure compliance with most up to date information regarding containment.
- Create a consistent policy for dismissal of students or staff who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 and must be dismissed from school. Include input, where appropriate, from the local health department, school medical advisor and school nurse supervisor.



Guidance

- Educate the school community about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19: see more information on the [CDC website](#). This will allow the community to best participate in observing, monitoring and when necessary, reporting symptoms.
- Provide resources to staff and families regarding local community testing, such as the contact information for [211](#).

9. Cancellation of Classes, Remote Learning, and Reopening Plans

Cancellation of Classes

LEAs must be prepared to adjust plans based on health indicators and guidance from health officials. Partial reopen plans must prioritize vulnerable populations, including but not limited to special education, those with barriers to remote learning, English Learners, and students in transition years.

LOW

- Schools operating up to 100% capacity, students/staff with underlying medical conditions should consider restrictions and blended/remote learning
- Buses up to full capacity with bus monitors recommended, facial coverings in place during transit, controlled loading/unloading of riders
- Face coverings for students and staff while inside school buildings
- Identification/isolation of sick students/staff
- Cohorting of students encouraged, particularly in younger grades, restrictions on congregating
- Maximize spacing of seating up to six feet when feasible
- Increased cleaning and sanitization protocols

DPH will be developing specific community and school-based indicators to assist leaders and define the appropriate decision-making approach.



MODERATE

- Schools operating at reduced capacity, with more reliance on hybrid model, blended/remote learning, prioritize access to school building for students who need the more learning support, including but not limited to those receiving special education, ELs or limited access due to devices or connectivity issues
- Buses at reduced capacity with bus monitors strongly recommended, facial coverings in place during transit, controlled loading/unloading of riders, spaced seating between unrelated riders
- Face coverings for students and staff while inside school buildings
- Maximize spacing of seating up to six feet or more when feasible with reduced class sizes
- Identification/isolation of sick students/staff
- Cohorting of students, restrictions on congregating, staggered start/stop times and hallway transit
- Indoor extracurricular activities should be suspended, sports and other outdoor activities should consider restrictions on activities
- Increased cleaning and sanitization protocols

DPH will be developing specific community and school-based indicators to assist leaders and define the appropriate decision-making approach.



HIGH

- Schools closed, 100% remote learning, bus transportation suspended, extracurricular activities, including sports, should be suspended



Requirements

- Develop a plan for school class cancellations and reopening to be implemented in the event that the superintendent, their designee, or state government suspends or cancels in-school classes for some or all participants.
- Notify and consult with the CSDE immediately if the LEA is contemplating class cancellations.
- Assume that any decision about school closure, reopening, or cancellation of school events will be made in coordination/collaboration with local health officials, and with the advice of the school medical advisor (if any) and school nurse supervisor.
- Anticipate that recommendations for the geographic scope (e.g., a single school, multiple schools, the full district, regionally), whether it will be partial or total, and duration of school dismissals will be made on a case-by-case basis using the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 and the specific cases in the community.
- Include a communication plan and clear policies for faculty and staff regarding individual roles and responsibilities in the event of a shutdown occurring during the school year.
- Prioritize ongoing educational opportunities when drafting the plan for shutdown. Materials for continuity of learning must be made available to allow for school sessions to continue remotely.



Guidance

- Review the CDC's updated guidance to [K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs](#) regarding temporary dismissal of students or staff for two to five days, if they attended school before being confirmed as having COVID-19. Take into consideration advice from public health officials or municipal officials, where needed or requested.
 - Be aware that the initial short-term dismissal allows (1) time for the local health officials to gain a better understanding of the COVID-19 situation affecting the school and (2) for the necessary cleaning and disinfecting of the facility. Appropriate next steps, may include an extended dismissal duration after review of the circumstances and consultation with relevant experts.
- Ensure the plan addresses the impact of class cancellations on extracurricular activities and before- and after-school programs.
- Initiate recommended [CDC cleaning procedures](#) following a confirmed COVID-19 case. Decisions on which, if any, staff should be allowed in the school should be made in collaboration with your local health department and school medical advisor, if applicable. When possible, allow time to lapse between dismissal and cleaning procedures.

Future Planning for Remote Blended Learning



Requirements

- Be prepared to provide remote blended learning opportunities immediately upon cancellation of in-school classes.
- Develop a plan for extended absences and communicate it with parents or guardians in the event of a second extended closure. Particular attention must be placed on communicating the distribution of food and devices or learning materials. Materials must be modified for use by students who are differently abled or multilingual.



Guidance

- Be prepared to provide remote blended learning opportunities immediately upon cancellation of in-school classes. Blended learning is defined as learning that combines online digital media with classroom methods, with some element of student control over time, place, path, or pace. Blended learning can take place on site, on campus, in a single classroom, or in remote settings.
- Define remote learning for the community. Remote learning, where students are not physically present in a traditional classroom environment, may happen through various platforms, such as a learning management system.
 - LEAs should consider their ability to switch from onsite to remote learning based on need. This requires preparedness.
 - Remote learning provides an opportunity for students and teachers to remain connected and engaged with the content while working from alternate locations. The transition to remote learning can keep students on track so that when they return to physical, onsite school environments, they will not be required to complete an excessive amount of make-up work.
 - Many of the requirements for onsite learning can remain in place while teaching and learning in remote locations.
- Consult resources for teaching in a blended learning environment that is both synchronous and asynchronous which can be found in the [Plan to Reimagine CT Classrooms for Continuous Learning](#).
- Consult the [COVID-19 Resources for Educators](#) provided by the CSDE as a tool to support student learning during school closures. Topics found here include:
 - Content specific resources to support student learning organized by both discipline and grade band;
 - Resources around student data privacy, grading practices, assessment, and professional learning; and
 - Instruction for three-tiered model of SRBI (Scientific Research-Based Intervention), SRBI resources, and MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) behavioral resources.

Reopening Plan

If class cancellations were initiated and a determination must be made about the approach to reopening, consult the most up-to-date [decision tree related to schools](#) from the CDC. As of the date of this guidance, the decision tree is available [on page 27](#).

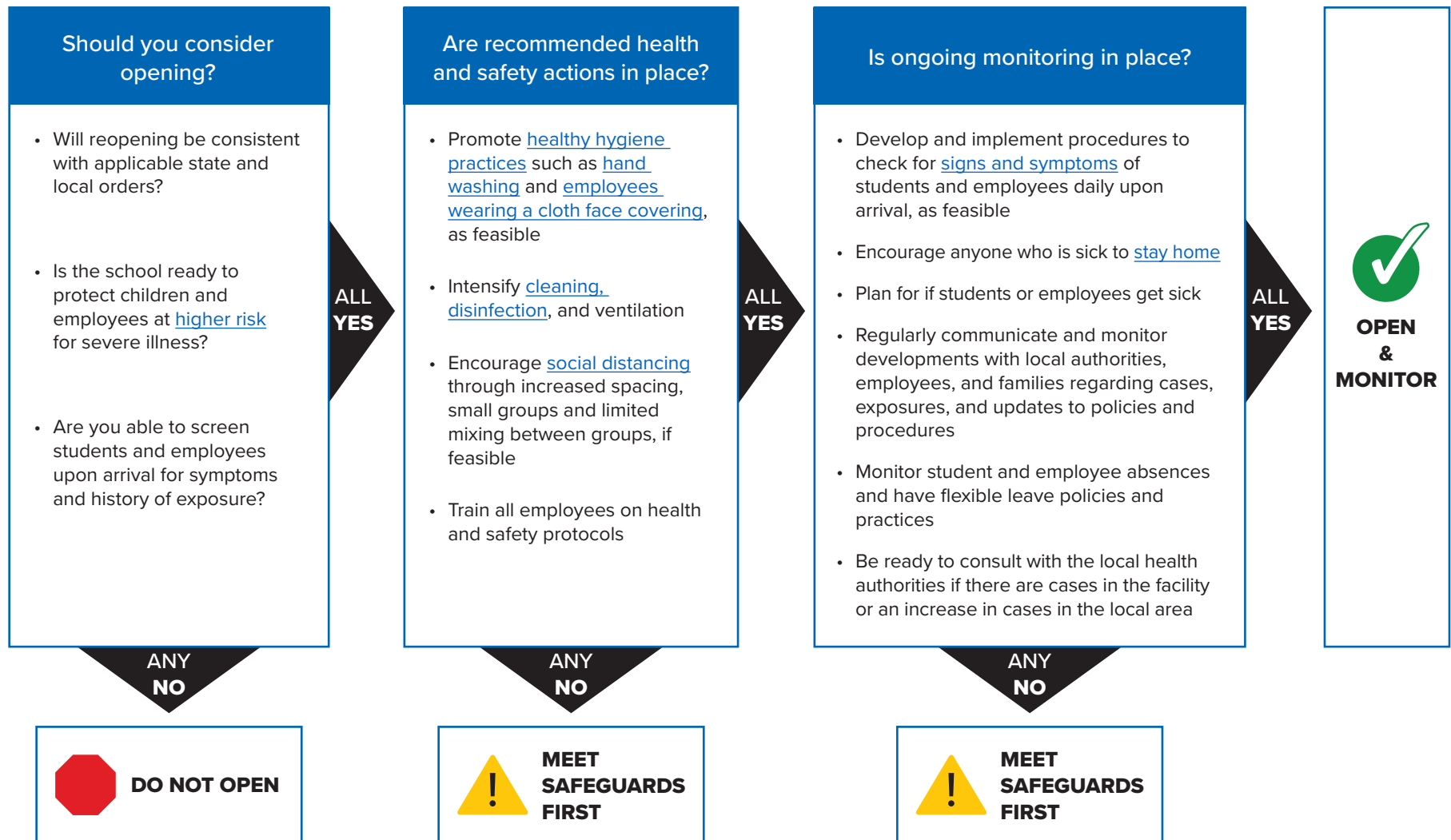
Also review the forthcoming DPH guidance.



cdc.gov/coronavirus

School Decision Tree

The purpose of this tool is to assist administrators in making (re)opening decisions regarding K–12 schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to check with state and local health officials and other partners to determine the most appropriate actions while adjusting to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community.



10. Academics

CT Learning Hub

The CSDE recognizes that in order to create future ready learning environments, teachers, students, and families require access to high quality, high impact resources and curricular materials. Beginning June 30, 2020, the CSDE will launch the CT Learning Hub. A place for universal access to curated high quality, high impact online learning content for math, English language arts, science, social studies, the arts, physical education and more anytime, anywhere. The CT Learning Hub is a free and interactive webpage of digital resources to support online and offline learning.

When a teacher, student, or parent clicks into the CT Learning Hub, they will be able to click on a menu of resources for core content (math, literacy, science, social studies, SEL), professional resources like lesson planning and blended learning templates, parent resources on how to support learning at home, and other digital and non-digital resources (online and offline).

Plan to Reimagine CT Classrooms for Continuous Learning

Continuity of learning, academic growth, and student connectedness are critical components of student well-being. Routines and connections with educators provide required stability, security, and structure that can keep our students happy, active, engaged, and healthy. The term “continuous learning” means establishing and maintaining connections with students and families to provide learning materials and supports using a variety of communication channels and modalities (e.g., email, phone, printed learning materials, and available online platforms).

The CSDE *Plan to Reimagine CT Classrooms for Continuous Learning* provides school systems with design principles as recommendations for how to assess capacity, analyze available instructional and technology resources, develop an approach to providing extended remote learning opportunities, and implement an extended remote learning plan. Each district must make local decisions in line with their needs and available resources, while aligning with the CSDE Plan to Reimagine CT Classrooms for Continuous Learning.



Guidance

- The CSDE strongly encourages *all districts to develop and implement the Plan to Reimagine CT Classrooms for Continuous Learning in partnership with teachers, families, and local education boards.*

The ***Plan to Reimagine CT Classrooms for Continuous Learning*** provides detailed strategies and resources for implementation. Resources include:

- Design principles for blended learning
- Role of families, students, educators and administrators
- Scheduling the school day and instructional time examples
- Recommendations for the design of the school day
- Guidance for supporting special populations (special education and ELs)

Assessment Practices for 2020–21

Resources to support the data analysis to inform instruction by the numbers and beyond the numbers can be found in the [CSDE Sensible Assessment Practice](#).

As schools plan for reopening in the fall and integrating their learners back into school, it is important to remember the following:

- Two-thirds of the 2019–20 school year was completed normally through in-person classes.
- During the remote learning period, nearly 75 percent of students participated fully though the quality of the learning experiences may have varied widely.
- Over 17 percent of students across the state experienced family, health, and trauma barriers to greater participation in remote learning.
- There is no single, “magic-bullet” assessment — whether screening or diagnostic or summative — that can meet the needs of all stakeholders and satisfy all purposes.
- For the vast majority of students who will enroll in Connecticut public schools in fall 2020, teachers already have a lot of longitudinal information available to them (e.g., annual state tests, universal screenings, early reading assessments, district benchmark tests from fall and winter, IEP progress reports, English language proficiency test results for ELs, student attendance patterns, disciplinary events, district and school mobility, course grades/failures, etc.).



Guidance

The CSDE recommends the following approach that is designed to ease students back into learning, fill any gaps, advance equity, minimize testing time, increase instructional time, and empower teachers (also see [infographic on page 31](#)). These practices are intended to apply to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners. The unique needs of these learners must be considered in the planning of both assessment and instruction, including the provision of supports, accommodations, and modifications as required in a student's IEP, Section 504 plan, or other intervention/learning plan.

Summer 2020 — Prior to the Start of School

- **Review Available Information:** This includes longitudinal data such as annual state tests, universal screening, early reading assessments, district benchmark tests from fall and winter, English language proficiency assessment results for ELs, IEP progress reports, student attendance patterns, disciplinary event, district and school mobility, course grades/failures, etc. Teachers can also learn a lot about their incoming class of students by talking individually with peers from the prior grade or in vertical teams. To assess means to evaluate or estimate. One does not need to administer a new test to “assess” students in fall 2020. Using multiple measures in lieu of a single test will result in a stronger “assessment” and better inferences. Students who are new to Connecticut public schools in 2020–21 will likely need a screening and/or overall assessment.
- **Plan the First Unit of Instruction:** To reduce student anxiety and ease them back into learning, educators should design the first unit of instruction for the start of the school year to not only engage students but also ensure that students will have a high probability of success with that unit. While the first unit is ideally an on-grade unit, in some instances it may be necessary for this unit to review standards from the prior grade. If a review approach is chosen for the first unit, then the selected content should emphasize the important prerequisite standards for new learning in the current grade.
- **Support Professional Learning:** Teachers may need professional learning opportunities on assessment/data literacy; formative assessment practices; differentiated instruction and personal learning; learning progressions of the Connecticut Core Standards; and blended learning (i.e., class that combines in-person classroom teaching with online instruction) approaches/tools.

Start of the School Year

- **Build Community with the New Class:** Some students may have experienced family issues, health emergencies, grief, and/or trauma due to the pandemic. Therefore, it is especially important in 2020–21 to take time at the start of the school year to build community and establish norms in the new class through fun and engaging activities. This will prepare students mentally to engage with the learning and any assessment. As mentioned earlier in this document, part of building community must include robust communication and engagement with families as learning partners, and these relationships should continue to be nurtured so if remote learning resumes, relationships between teachers and families will be strong. Without such community building at the outset, any formal assessment may artificially depress student achievement.
- **Deliver the First Unit:** The first unit should not only be engaging, but also allow students to have a high probability of success in learning the material. This will help students to ease into learning in the new school year and experience success early. Teachers should differentiate instruction and utilize formative assessment practices to gauge the impact of their teaching and adjust instruction as necessary. To minimize student anxiety at the start of the school year, this unit should not require the administration of a separate test. For certain students, Tier 2 supports can be embedded within the classroom to accelerate learning and advance equity.

Rest of the School Year

- Shift fully to on-grade instruction with scaffolds and supports as illustrated in the [infographic on page 31](#). The same cycle then continues for each instructional unit for the remainder of the year.

End of the School Year

At the end of the year, the student is administered an on-grade summative assessment (which may be the state assessment for students in Grades 3–8 and 11) to evaluate overall achievement on the state standards.

Sensible Assessment Practices in 2020–21 and Beyond

1. Summer 2020

★ Review Available Information

In lieu of a separate assessment, what can we already know about our students from existing data/information?*

Vertical Teams for Teachers, Interventionists, Instructional Specialists, and Related Service Providers

- What standards were taught in-person pre-COVID and during distance learning?
- How does the previous teacher describe the student's strengths and weaknesses?
- How well did the student engage in distance learning?

Longitudinal Data (Non-Assessment)

- Early Indication Tool support level (Low-Medium-High), attendance, discipline, mobility, course failures, etc.

Longitudinal Data (Assessment)

- K-Inventory, Smarter Balanced, NGSS, Alt. Assessments, LAS Links, IAB, F-IAB, Fall/Winter Benchmark, IEP Progress Reports

★ Plan the First Unit and Support Professional Learning

The first unit should not only engage students but also ensure that students will have a high probability of success. Teachers will need professional learning on topics such as assessment/data literacy, formative assessment practices, differentiated instruction, learning progressions, blended learning approaches/tools.

**Students new to CT public schools will likely need a screening and/or overall assessment such as the ICA or a local benchmark assessment.*

2. Start of the School Year

★ Build Community with New Class While Delivering the First Unit

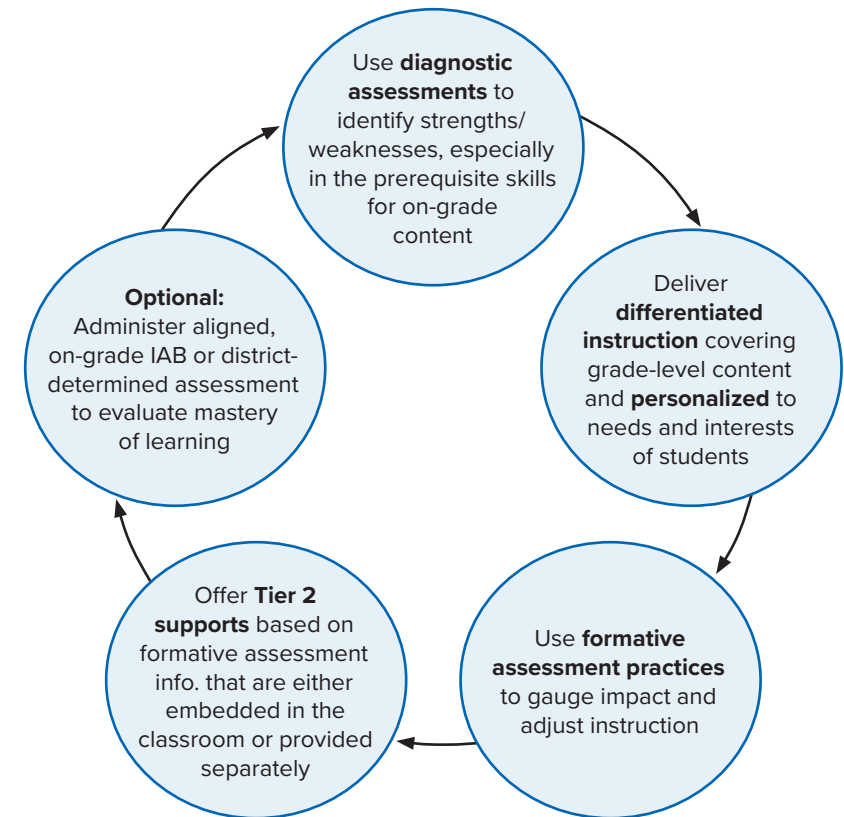
Acknowledge and address social-emotional learning needs and family/health/trauma issues due to pandemic. Start with a unit that is engaging and has high probability of success. Review key prior grade content if necessary.

- **Deliver differentiated instruction** by starting with engaging on-grade unit with high probability of success; review if necessary.
- **Use formative assessment practices** to gauge impact and adjust instruction.
- **Embed Tier 2 supports** in the classroom based on review of available information in the summer.

3. Rest of the School Year

★ Shift Fully to On-Grade Instruction with Scaffolds and Supports

If the first unit incorporates review, then the shift fully to on-grade instruction should occur within 2–3 weeks. Districts should identify prerequisite content for each instructional unit and the corresponding diagnostic assessment.



4. End

★ Administer End-of-Year Summative Assessment

Administer an on-grade summative assessment (which may be the state assessment for students in Grades 3–8 and 11) to evaluate overall achievement on state standards

Attendance and Discipline

Maximizing in-person instructional time after a lengthy period of disruption is critical. The CSDE, in consultation with stakeholders, will continue to support LEAs in developing options for students and families related to attendance and disciplinary issues in future guidance.



Guidance

- Address school attendance with parents, through teachers in the classroom, with community providers, and through all modes of communication.
- Ensure that systems are in place for early identification of students who are missing too much school, detecting the root causes, and implementing and monitoring effective tiered interventions for reversing a pattern of absenteeism.
- Revisit school discipline policies with a focus on re-engaging students in their building rather than removing them from school. Consider the unique circumstance students are facing returning to the structure of school after a period of disruption, and potentially factors such as grief or trauma that might influence behavior.
- Review the CSDE resource entitled [Improving Attendance by Addressing School Health Assessments and Immunizations](#), which provides strategies for schools, districts, and community health providers to work together to ensure that school health and immunization requirements are met prior to deadlines for school exclusion. Be reminded that on June 17, 2020, DPH confirmed the decision to require that all students be up to date on their immunizations when school starts.
- Further guidance for assessing student engagement and participation during remote learning and discipline in schools in the context of the pandemic is evolving and will be shared as it is released.
- Consider the following guidance:
 - [Attendance Guidance and Ensuring Student Engagement during School Class Cancellations Due to COVID-19, Memorandum, Commissioner Miguel A. Cardona, April 9, 2020](#)
 - [Attendance Playbook: Smart Strategies for Reducing Chronic Absenteeism in the COVID Era, FutureEd, Georgetown University, and Attendance Works](#)
 - [Guide to Using the Attendance Playbook: Smart Strategies for Reducing Chronic Absenteeism in the COVID Era, Attendance Works, June 2020](#)
 - [Monitoring Attendance in Distance Learning, a new data framework for monitoring attendance whether school is virtual or blended, Attendance Works, June 2020](#)

Special Education

While reopening may present challenges for all, students with disabilities may experience these challenges to a greater extent than their peers and take longer to remediate lost skills. Students with disabilities face many challenges, including health concerns and may be disproportionately affected by changes in their education, requiring flexibility in how their re-entry occurs.

To address the complexities of returning to school for our students who receive special education and related services, further guidance will be forthcoming and will be shared as it is released. See current [special education guidance](#) on the CSDE website.



Requirements

- Prepare with the understanding that there has been no waiver of requirements under the IDEA for provision of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). During COVID-19 school closures, schools were required to provide FAPE consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students, as well as those individuals providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to these students. Schools may not have been able to provide all services in the same manner that they are typically provided. Federal disability law allows for flexibility in determining how to meet the individualized needs of students receiving special education services.
- Treat students eligible for special education and other special populations as general education students first. Guidance and policies related to school reopening plans apply to all students, including students with special needs who qualify for individual education programs under the IDEA and accommodation plans for eligible students under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If students with disabilities are unable to access the reopening plan as designed, facilitate individualized and alternative means of re-entry based upon student need, present levels of functioning, developmental levels, and student/parent input. Consider blended learning schedules if needed.
- Do not make programming decisions based on a student's disability category. However, the nature and/or severity of a student's disability may require unique considerations. Protocols should consider the student's developmental level and skills.



Guidance

- Anticipate flexibility with these guidelines for specific special education programs, so long as the program follows established standards as well as public health strategies such as proper hygiene, social distancing, and cleaning/sanitizing.
- Implement protocols to communicate safety guidelines to students, staff, and families to ensure that they feel safe within the school environment (use multiple means of communication in multiple languages to ensure equal access to the information).
- Communicate with families of students with a high level of need to develop transition plans to assist special population and special education students in their return to the school building. The use of social stories, visual cues, and other appropriate developmental strategies should be used to reinforce these new concepts and protocols.
- Work with local special education and McKinney-Vento staff and students/parents to develop a COVID-19 transportation protocol for each special needs and student.
- Identify students who have had the most difficulty accessing remote learning opportunities and prioritize access to in-person instruction, for example:
 - students who may require direct physical assistance for safety, health and self-care (feeding, toileting, activities of daily living [ADL]);
 - Staff/educators will continue to abide by all the OSHA guidelines.
 - Develop protocols for PPE and soiled clothing.
 - students who may exhibit significant behaviors that require de-escalation strategies and emergency safety protocols;
 - Training for staff in use of emergency physical interventions and use of PPE.
 - students that have significant communication and/or executive functioning deficits;
 - students with impaired vision, hearing, and/or other physical disabilities; and
 - students who have been unable to access related services.

- Identify students who are unable to wear protective personal equipment, practice social distancing, or adhere to other CDC or CSDE guidelines. In consultation with your local health department consider the following:
 - Environmental modifications
 - Use of alternative face coverings (clear)
 - Reduction of class size
 - Assign staff to specific students/instructional environments to limit exposure
 - Toileting/ADL protocols
- Consider protocols for community based learning opportunities including for students whose IEPs require transition services/activities.
- Be prepared that there may be certain high-risk students and/or families who may require continuing remote instruction full time due to underlying health conditions, undergoing disease treatment, or those with family members who are at-risk.

English Learners (ELs)

While returning to school will present challenges for all, English learners (ELs) may experience these challenges to a greater extent than their peers, as they transition back to a school setting from remote learning and continue to develop their English language proficiency concurrently while learning grade-level academic content. To mitigate these challenges, **schools must make every effort to provide support to ELs to allow them to access academic content as well as providing them with their supplemental language instruction program.** English language development is a part of universal instruction. It is paramount that grade level content provided with adequate scaffolds and supports, so that ELs may access the grade level content being provided in the classroom while developing language proficiency.



Requirements

- Understand that like all other students, ELs are entitled to FAPE. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IV, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (1974) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) provide guidance on the services to which ELs are entitled. ELs must have access to the general education curriculum as well as to a supplemental language instruction education program. During school closures due to COVID-19, ELs continue to be entitled to receive their supplemental EL instructional program in addition to their general education program of mainstream, grade-level and content-area instruction. Such language instructional education programs may consist of a range of services, including bilingual education, English as a Second Language (ESL), Sheltered Instruction and others. When returning to school buildings, language instruction education programs must continue.
- Comply with the requirement that eligible students in bilingual mandated districts are offered bilingual education programs. During COVID-19, school districts that are mandated to provide bilingual education remain required to offer a bilingual program to eligible students who have opted into the program. While program implementation may be altered during COVID-19 as compared to traditional in-building schooling, students in bilingual programs are still entitled to receive native language support as part of their school's designated bilingual program model. As with other language instruction education programs, when returning to traditional schooling, bilingual programs must continue.
- Communicate with parents and guardians that have limited proficiency in English in a language they understand as required by Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. As during traditional schooling, communications during school closures due to COVID-19 may be provided through translation and/or interpretation.

- Provide ELs who are also identified as students with disabilities supports for their EL needs, as well as supports for their disabilities. During COVID-19, these dually identified students must continue to receive these supports. As in times with traditional schooling, dually identified students should have their language needs represented in their annual meetings about their IEP.



Guidance

- Consider that flexibility may be necessary for the implementation of specific supplemental language instruction education programs, but these programs must continue to be provided to ELs during remote learning.
- Establish systems for ongoing collaboration between Bilingual and TESOL teachers, EL support providers and grade-level and content-area teachers. Ensure that mainstream teachers embed accessibility tools, such as scaffolds, explicit vocabulary instruction and differentiated supports into their grade-level and content-area instruction.
- Develop and maintain ongoing communication with families of ELs regarding remote learning and returning to their school building. Create procedures for supporting translation and interpretation for families with limited English proficiency regarding remote learning, instructional methods and returning to school.
- Encourage the maintenance and development of students' home and/or native language, whether during remote learning or when learning returns to school buildings. Develop a school culture where multilingualism is seen as a rich asset that contributes to the school and broader communities. Initiatives such as the Seal of Biliteracy and the establishment of dual language bilingual programs offer strengths-based, asset-oriented perspectives on multilingualism.
- Offer web-based, on-demand professional learning on how to serve ELs effectively through the Pathways to Success for English Learners professional development series or other online, high-quality professional learning. Note that the Pathways online modules are free of charge and intended primarily for generalist educators.
- Establish a process for carrying out the required procedures for potential English learners and identified English learners including:
 - ensuring adherence to the statewide identification procedures (i.e., Home Language Survey, English language proficiency screener);
 - continuing to provide parental notifications (i.e., EL identification letter, EL continuation of services letter, EL exit letter);
 - adhering to annual English language proficiency assessment requirements;
 - offering translation and/or interpretation to parents/guardians with limited English proficiency.
- Attend to the SEL needs of English learners, understanding that ELs may have unique, individual needs from each other and from their non-EL peers.

Physical Education, Athletics, Arts, and Extracurricular Activities

Plan to balance the importance of engaging students in a well-rounded educational opportunity, including physical education, unified arts, and extracurricular activities, with the need for modifications to avoid any increased public health risk.



Requirements

- Follow all CDC, state, and local guidelines related to social distancing and disinfecting areas and equipment used for physical education and physical activity, including recess.

- Develop plans for the implementation of a physical education, fine arts, and music curriculum that consider the needs of all students, including focusing on activities, adaptations, and modifications of all education decisions to ensure the full inclusion by all students.



Guidance

Physical Education

- Provide physical education through a combination of in-classroom instruction and activities tailored according to available spaces, restrictions on gatherings, and use of shared equipment.
- Provide professional development for revising curriculum and instruction to align with necessary modifications due to changes in the instructional space, blended learning, and alternative physical fitness activities.
- Focus on activities, fitness, exercises, and sports that are teacher led but performed individually and focus on lifetime fitness, utilizing alternative environments, land-based activities, and individual sports/activities such as mindfulness, tai chi, meditation, taekwondo, fitness-based activities, step aerobics, Pilates, yoga, individual sports, strength development, target activities, backyard games, dance (creative/modern dance, aerobic dance, traditional dance), power walking, orienteering, geocaching, outdoor education, hiking/reading trail signs, hoop games, track and field, singles racket games, etc.
- Support social-emotional learning through classroom instruction and utilizing appropriate games and activities.
- Match the instructional design to the available space; use stations, marked off areas, and staggered participation to ensure separation and distancing between students during activities. For example, the use of hula hoops on the ground or floor provide visual cues for maintaining distance to engage in learning.
- Plan for regular cleaning and disinfecting of all indoor and outdoor facilities, playscapes, and equipment between use by students.
- Repurposing gymnasiums to serve as classrooms may limit the ability to deliver some physical education content especially in the skill-building area. Cognitive and affective content and limited skill/fitness content could be delivered in an alternate space such as a classroom. Consider reorganizing and prioritizing the sequence of units to provide content and learning opportunities that can be delivered outdoors in appropriate weather and other content delivered later in the year through a blended approach in homerooms or online.
- If health and hygiene measures limit locker room use, this may affect hygiene needs associated with vigorous physical activity, which may limit the ability to fitness train and/or test. However, fitness/training concepts can still be taught through didactic instruction and reinforcing skill development and individual fitness goals.
- Loss of water fountain usage could affect physical activity delivery as hydration is important for student health and safety. Allow students to use personal water bottles and provide water bottles as needed. Guard against sharing water bottles.
- Educators can incorporate additional opportunities for movement in and/or out of the classroom through stretching, seated yoga, and walking outdoor classrooms.
- For further considerations on interscholastic athletics and activities, consult the [guidance provided by CIAC](#).

Arts and Music Education

- Consult the resources provided by the [Connecticut Arts Administrators Association](#).
- For handling musical instruments, consult the [National Association for Music Education's COVID-19 Instrument Cleaning Guidelines](#).
- Provide sufficient instructional minutes to support standards-based curriculum, student learning expectations, and district goals.
- Add to class time for materials and tools to be distributed by teacher only or area designated for individual storage and to allow for proper cleaning of materials.
- Strive to maintain current program of studies and course offerings, within safety precautions.
- Maintain proper spacing of at least 12 feet when students are singing or performing wind instruments by scheduling large ensembles in auditoriums, outdoors, cafeterias, gyms or other large spaces. Focus on maximizing distancing for instruments that require blowing or for singing, compared with string and percussion instruments.
- Schedule large ensembles into smaller groups throughout the day. Shift curriculum focus to solo and small ensemble work. Shift from a concert format to a recital format. Create virtual performance experiences and assessments.
- Maintain small homogeneous groupings of instruments for lesson instruction.
- Continue full access to beginning instrumental music.
- Provide individual art supply kits for each student, or plan for increased sanitization between all use.
- Include tech devices as options for photography at home, storage of photos and exporting image files.
- Use on-line apps or platforms for student work (e.g., SeeSaw, Artsonia, Google Classroom, Flip Grid, SmartMusic, Sound Trap, Acapella, museum collections, painting/drawing platforms), video displays (e.g., YouTube), and slides (e.g., Google Slides, PowerPoint).
- Further guidance related to chorus instruction will be shared as it is released.

11. Family and Student Engagement

Reopening schools is an opportunity to deepen relationships and engage families in authentic partnerships to support evolving models of teaching and learning.

Family Support and Communication



Requirements

- Comply with all state and federal family engagement requirements (e.g., School Governance Councils and Title I requirements) during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Prepare to provide families with clear and ongoing communication about what to expect, during and prior to reopening. This includes, but is not limited to, guidance on the school protocols related to health and safety guidelines.
- Continue to engage with families and students as the reopening moves forward to ensure they are informed and have the ability to provide feedback.
- Make reopen plans available on the LEA website, accessible, and clearly identify the school liaison.



Guidance

- Align the reopening plan with evidence-based family engagement and, importantly, with families' perspectives on partnering with schools. [Connecticut's Framework for Family Engagement](#) provides a definition of family engagement that was co-created with families from across the state and is grounded in research and best practice:

“Family Engagement is a full, equal, and equitable partnership among families, educators and community partners to promote children’s learning and development from birth through college and career.”

- Provide training opportunities for families on device use and access to school platforms. Plan ways to engage in person at the beginning of the school year, following all health and safety rules, since the target audience may not be able to access training online.
- Use Connecticut’s [definition of family engagement](#) to frame the objectives for an effective approach to school-family partnerships.
 - *Create full, equal and equitable partnerships.* View families as full partners in education. Recognize that families bring valuable knowledge to the table and involve them in advance planning and decision-making. Empower families to work with educators, public officials, and community partners to remove systemic, structural, and organizational barriers that perpetuate inequities and injustice.
- Implement high-impact family engagement strategies by applying the [guiding principles](#) in Connecticut’s Framework for Family Engagement.
 - *Build collaborative, trusting relationships.* Recognize that all high-impact family engagement strategies are grounded in trust and respect. Create a welcoming atmosphere in school buildings and in all school communications. Establish reliable systems for two-way, personal and ongoing communication with families.

- *Prioritize what families say about their children's interests and challenges.* Consider monthly parent-teacher conferences or connections throughout the 2020–21 school year to support and engage families and gain their perspectives on their children's experiences during this time.
- *Model high-quality learning practices.* Consider webinars for families to demonstrate teaching techniques and other supports for learning that they can use at home.
- *Share information frequently with families about how their children are doing.* Consider how families might track their students' progress and provide opportunities for families to ask questions and understand the expectations for progress.
- *Engage students in conversations about how they want teachers and families to support their learning.*
- *Co-develop cultural competence among staff and families.* Create opportunities for families and staff to work together to build students' home cultures into programming and curriculum by centering families as authorities on their cultures and experiences.
- *Support parents to become effective leaders and advocates for children.* Empower parent-led groups to support families by providing timely and accurate information and resources. Invest in parent leadership training opportunities.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Mental Health



Requirements

- Develop a detailed plan to reengage all students, staff and families. Particularly identify strategies to identify and engage populations and specific students that have been disengaged.
- Prepare staff to identify issues related to abuse and neglect in the context of the pandemic and comply with all mandated reporting requirements.



Guidance

- Provide a period of time for students to acclimate back to school. Focus on the whole child and use this period to reestablishing routines and relationships.
- Intensify communication efforts with all families and at the same time provide additional supports for students who are struggling or at risk.
- Communicate the importance of SEL as a foundational and necessary aspect of a highly functioning school community.
- Consult the available resources on SEL, for example, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) publication, [Leveraging the Power of SEL as You Prepare to Reopen and Renew your School Community](#).
- Consider staff in addressing SEL and mental health support.
 - Design opportunities for adults to connect, heal, and cultivate their own SEL competence. Work with school and district-based mental health staff, psychologists, counselors, social workers, and school nurses to lead these efforts.
 - Ensure access to mental health and trauma support for adults.

- Incorporate SEL and mental health support activities into online learning by employing activities such as wellness checks, discussion circles about important issues, and lessons that directly address SEL and mental health.
- Consult the multiple support resources related to SEL and mental health that may be accessed here: [COVID-19 Resources for Families and Educators](#).
- Review and incorporate the [Kindergarten through Grade 3 Social, Emotional, and Intellectual Habits Framework](#) as it represents the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that form an essential blueprint for college and career readiness to achieve academic success and social/emotional learning.

After-school Programming

After-school programs can play an important role in providing supports for students during traditional after-school hours, including days in which students are engaged in remote learning and not scheduled to be in class. Traditional after-school programs do not need to operate only after school dismissal and can support families on days when students are not scheduled for classroom instruction. As schools reopen and parents return to working outside the home, after-school programs can assist in providing safe places to provide care for students while simultaneously providing support and assistance to enhance remote learning.



Requirements

- Programs receiving funding from the CSDE through the State After School, Extended School Hours (ESH) and 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC) programs, consult with the CSDE for individual grant-specific guidance.
- Follow the requirements outlined in this document, as applicable, including but not limited to requiring the use of face coverings that cover the nose and mouth, and maximizing social distancing.



Guidance

- Consider the logistics of after-school program space utilization to ensure that social distancing requirements are maintained and students are exposed to the fewest practicable number of other students and staff.
- Consider utilization of classrooms for on-site after-school programming that minimizes students' exposure to other students and common areas. For example: staff participating in the after-school program use the same classroom that students are in during the school day and provide after school care from the end of the school day until 5 p.m.
- Partner with community-based organizations (YMCA/YWCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, faith-based organizations, etc.) to identify space outside the school to provide off-site after-school programming.
- Maximize social distancing and limit exposure to other students during classroom instruction, after-school activities, meals, bathroom usage and transportation.
- Apply the same cohorting recommendations for the school day, when feasible.

Adult Education



Guidance

- Create a set of policies and procedures to address the physical return of students and teachers to the buildings. All policies and procedures should be in line with this document, LEA policies, and CDC guidelines in order to ensure a safe and productive educational environment. [See also Cancellation of Classes, Remote Learning, and Reopening Plan, page 24.](#)
- Consider protocols that address specific times of entry and social distancing while waiting; registration policies and procedures; assessment, placement, and testing; and class structure such as options for blended classes or remote learning in addition to in-person classes.

12. Career and Technical Education

Connecticut's vision is that schools provide each student access to rigorous pathways and programs of study that result in students graduating with the essential knowledge, skills and employability expertise to successfully meet the demands of Connecticut's expanding economy. Connecticut Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are part of the comprehensive educational system and due to the nature of CTE programs and the hands-on approach that is necessary, additional elements must be considered as schools plan for a safe reopening.

CTE programs use a hands-on approach to develop job readiness skills and trade competencies. The core of the curriculum is experiential and students often work closely together in small groups. Many CTE programs require students to develop physical dexterity and motor skills through regular practice over significant periods of time. CTE instruction is maximized when it is delivered in-person through practical experience, whether in the classroom, at production sites or through work-based learning.

During CTE instruction, students may need to share tools, materials or equipment during the course of a school day. Although the guidelines prohibit this type of sharing, CTE programs may need to take unique precautions, such as providing students with gloves and other PPE, minimizing the amount of sharing, following an accepted protocol of cleaning and sanitizing and training both staff and students in COVID-19 related safety.

Flexibility with these guidelines is permitted for CTE activities as long as the CTE program follows established workplace industry standards as well as public health protocols.




Requirements

- Develop a plan for cleaning and disinfecting shared equipment in the shop or lab, before and after each use. Many CTE courses assign tasks to students who assist in cleanup at the end of class, and the students should be trained in all safety processes and procedures. Include a properly labeled spray bottle or disinfectant wipe near the equipment along with a small trash receptacle. Include a process for collection, sanitation, and logging of equipment and tools.



Guidance

- Apply the standards outlined above for cleaning and disinfecting high touch areas.
- Create a plan to address the public access to the building including Early Care and Education Programs as well as cafes in Culinary Arts.
- Anticipate that student run early child programs will need to comply with all relevant public health guidance outlining the enhanced cleaning, sanitizing, social distancing, face covering use, and hygiene requirements for these programs.
- Determine the appropriate safety measure for the Culinary Foods labs while food is being prepared and consumed. This may include, but is not limited to, staggered schedules, repurposing of space, use of gloves, increased hand washing protocols, and prioritizing "to go" options for food.
- Consider ways to minimize exposure when exchanging payment in any CTE program.
- Ensure students are actively accessing their CTE curriculum by considering the following:
 - Provide students with options for demonstrating their understanding.
 - Incorporate tools and materials that students can access at home.

- 
- A vertical decorative bar on the left side of the page, featuring a light blue background with white line-art icons. The icons include a clock, a lightbulb, a brain, a graduation cap, a laptop, a heart, and a flower, among others.
- Focus on Instruction and Engagement: Acknowledge the challenges and constraints of home-based, remote learning. Remain flexible and open to improvisation. Provide clear instructional goals and keep CTE lessons relevant.
 - Use online, interactive simulators (e.g., CAD, online welding simulators, safety lessons and fabrication mathematics).
 - Chunk and scaffold assignments.
 - Provide short, online learning videos that are integrated into lessons to explain concepts or demonstrations (e.g., Motor Oil on YouTube).
 - Offer online CareerSafe and OSHA 10 training.
 - Develop portable lab kits that can be sent home.

13. Staffing and Personnel

Certification and Personnel Planning

The CSDE has maintained the timely processing of applications for certification during the pandemic. The CSDE will continue to provide support to LEAs to hire appropriately certified educators for the 2020–21 school year to help support equitable access to highly qualified educators.

The employment of appropriately certified, authorized and/or permitted educators remains crucial to the success of all students. To assist this goal, all LEA-based forms have been adopted to accommodate the timely processing of temporary authorizations and requests including Durational Shortage Area Permits (DSAPs), 90-Day Initial Certificates, Charter School Educator Permits (CSEPs), Long Term Substitute Authorizations, Emergency Coaching Certificates and Resident Educator Certificates. For additional information about processing these forms remotely, please see the following [CSDE educator certification newsletter](#).



Requirements

- Prepare with school human resources and board counsel to comply with legal and regulatory requirements related to personnel, including but not limited to the EEOC [guidance](#) related to the ADA and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Assess how to engage a full roster of staff, including potential substitute plan, and whether stipends or changes in substitute pay is required to support the needs of the school.



Guidance

- Engage certified and uncertified staff in surveying the experience from the Spring of 2020 during the period of school disruption, and request implementable ideas to support the LEA's approach the fall 2020 reopening.
- Assess if schools will require increased certified staff, additional support staff, or new positions related to care and cleaning of facilities.
- Utilize the [EdSight Active Endorsement Search Tool](#) to access Connecticut Educator Certification data for strategic recruitment and hiring information to maximize student access to qualified educators. For additional information, please see the [EdSight Secure FAQ](#).
- Plan to support staff health. Implement flexible sick leave policies and practices that enable staff to stay home when sick, have been exposed, or are caring for the sick.
- Engage with staff labor representatives and consider whether Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) are appropriate or necessary to define the role for different staff units in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Educator Evaluation and Support Plans

The CSDE, in consultation with stakeholders, will be issuing future guidance related to Educator Evaluation and Support Plans for the 2020–2021 school year.

Professional Development



Requirements

- Prioritize mandatory training for staff, before the beginning of the school year, that covers signs and symptoms of COVID-19, Standard Public Health protocols, Hygiene Practices, PPE, Reporting Illnesses, and supporting SEL. Plan ongoing trainings as changes occur in recommendations and public health data.



Guidance

- It is recommended that Professional Development & Evaluation Committees (PEDCs) meet (virtually or via phone) to make recommendations about professional learning, resources, and supports for paraeducators, teacher, and administrators.
- Beyond training for the health and safety related needs of the school community, plan to provide teacher and staff professional development related to use of technology platforms, training on supporting and giving feedback to students training on the accessibility needs of students with disabilities, and training on effective student engagement (by grade level) within online/hybrid learning environments. Include substitute teachers when possible.
- Provide professional learning to build educators capacity to support students' SEL and also support their own mental health and wellness. Sessions can be led by mental health staff on topics such as active listening, compassion, relationship building. One such mental health related training option is Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR).

Additional Resources

The pandemic has required greater flexibility for all Connecticut residents and the need to adjust to changes with limited notice, therefore, the CSDE plans to continue to develop and update guidance documents and support schools in their efforts to navigate educating our students while also prioritizing health and safety. Please review the [CSDE website](#) regularly.

Please also find the links below that were referenced throughout this document along with additional sites that were identified as useful.

CDC

[CDC Considerations for Schools](#)

[CDC Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#)

[CDC Cleaning & Disinfecting Guidance](#)

[CDC Symptoms of Coronavirus](#)

[CDC What You Do If You Are Sick](#)

[CDC Quarantine & Isolation](#)

[CDC Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19](#)

[CDC When and How to Wash Your Hands](#)

[CDC Planning for K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs](#)

[CDC Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs](#)

[CDC Schools Decision Tree for Schools Reopening](#)

[CDC Guidance Keeping Students Healthy While School's Out](#)

CDC Communications & Print Materials

[CDC Communications Resources](#)

[CDC COVID Print Resources, Multiple Languages](#)

[CDC COVID PSAs](#)

[CDC COVID Videos](#)

[CDC COVID Social Media Toolkit](#)

[CDC Child Posters, Multiple Languages](#)

[CDC What you Need to Know About Handwashing VIDEO](#)

CSDE

[Connecticut LEA School Reopening Template](#)

[COVID Resources for Educators](#)

[State Level Priorities: Sustaining Local School District Capacity & Providing Equity and Access to a High Quality Education for All Children](#)

[Attendance Guidance and Ensuring Student Engagement during School Class Cancellations Due to COVID-19](#)

[Improving Attendance by Addressing School Health Assessments and Immunizations](#)

[Plan for Reimagining CT Classrooms for Continuous Learning](#)

[Sensible Assessment Practices 2020-21 and Beyond](#)

[Full, Equal and Equitable Partnerships with Families: Connecticut's Definition and Framework for Family Engagement](#)

[edSight Active Endorsement Search Tool](#)

Other

DPH: [Guidance for the Cleaning and Disinfection of Schools during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

DPH: [Return to Service Guidance for Building Water Systems](#)

DPH: [Guidance for School Systems for the Operation of Central and non-Central Ventilation Systems during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission COVID-19 Guidance](#)

[CIAC Resocialization of Interscholastic Athletics and Activities Programs Guidelines](#)

[NAFME COVID-19 Instrument Cleaning Guide](#)

[School Re-Entry Considerations: K-12 Physical Education, Health, Education & Physical Activity](#)

[Leveraging the Power of SEL as You Prepare to Reopen and Renew](#)

[Partner Resources](#) (multiple languages)

Darien

Public Schools

District Reopening Schools Task Force *Summary Report and Recommendations*

July 13, 2020



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OVERVIEW

The Darien Reopening Schools Task Force (DRS) formed in response to the COVID-19 global health crisis. The Darien Public Schools closed its physical doors on March 12, 2020, resulting in community-wide engagement in remote learning. As we look toward the 2020-2021 school year, we must thoughtfully plan and prepare for various reopening scenarios including:

Physical Return:	All students physically return to school in August following health and safety guidelines.
Remote Learning Return:	Students are not physically present but learn through synchronous and asynchronous learning experiences using a virtual platform.
Hybrid Return:	Students engage in some combination of physical and an eLearning scenario (e.g. partial day, rotating schedule, staggered reopening etc.)

The DRS consists of 50 members including teachers, administrators, special education related service providers and representation from the Darien Board of Education. Over the course of four meetings, DRS members identified lessons learned from the closing, discussed barriers and solutions related to reopening schools, and reviewed survey data from families and staff (Figure 1). Members of DRS worked as a whole and in five smaller groups focused on *Teaching & Learning*, *Operations*, *Health & Wellness*, *Communications*, and *Special Education*. The areas of focus were determined following a review of research and resources related to school operations during the pandemic. Each of the subcommittees offered recommendations aligned to this research as well as state and federal guidance, reflections on experiences, and stakeholder survey data.



Figure 1 - Process overview of DRS Task Force

This summary report includes the guiding principles, insights gained from surveys, subcommittee focus areas, subcommittee recommendations, and next steps to develop the Darien plan for reopening schools. This report will be made public and serve as a guide for the administration to safely reopen schools in August.

Guiding Principles

- 1 - Prioritize the safety of students, staff and families.
- 2 - Align recommendations with guiding documents from state departments and related research.
- 3 - Develop a thoughtful communication plan that offers clarity and consistency.
- 4 - Make decisions in the best interest of all students.
- 5 - Create equitable conditions for all students to access learning.
- 6 - Make timely decisions aligned with guiding documents.
- 7 - Embrace opportunities for innovation.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework below was created to offer a visual representation of the structure, organization, and progression of the DRS work. The “D” at the center of the image represents Darien Public Schools as the core focus of task force collaboration. The five subcommittees are represented with arrows suggesting individual groups must work together to develop recommendations that offer systemic coherence. The outer circles of classrooms, schools, and home and communities represent our various stakeholder groups.

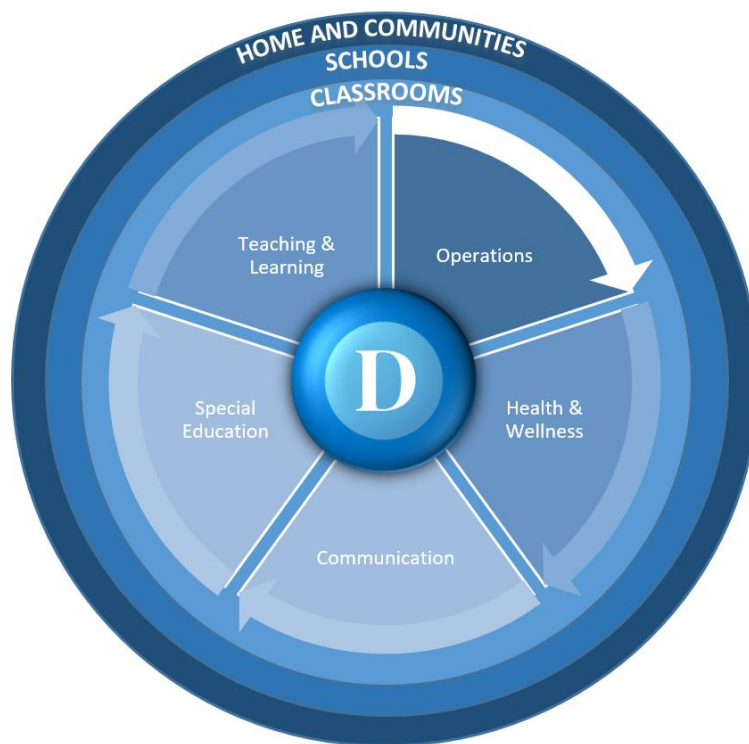


Figure 2 - DRS Conceptual Framework

LESSONS LEARNED

Each subcommittee engaged in a protocol to highlight lessons learned during our period of eLearning. While subcommittees engaged in this activity as smaller groups, clear themes emerged highlighting key takeaways. Common themes across groups included:

1. Relationships are paramount regardless of learning platform. Students and adults need to feel connected.
2. Clear expectations are needed from the start. Live instruction, priority standards, participation in specials, student engagement expectations, and the role of families must be clear and consistent.
3. Professional development with instructional technology needs to shift from “how to use” to “how to instruct”. The initial learning was focused on understanding how it works and more learning is needed for high-quality teaching and learning.
4. The need for social and emotional learning for students does not go away when school is not in session. We need a better plan for students and staff health and wellness as we move forward.
5. Maintaining relationships with families and school resources (psychologists, counselors) cannot be lost.
6. Students benefit from regular progress monitoring and feedback. Better systems are needed to accomplish this.
7. Regular schedules and routines are important. However, it might have been worth thinking a bit more out-of-the-box with schedule. School at home doesn’t look the same, therefore, schedules might need to reflect that more.
8. Communication should be clear and consistent.
9. Access to materials for all students must be equitable (technology, books, supplies).
10. Staff deserve feedback regardless of waivers of formal evaluation systems.

SURVEY DATA

Parents and staff received surveys to provide feedback and guide DRS recommendations. In just over a week, the committee received responses from nearly 2,000 participants. The survey gathered both quantitative and qualitative data summarized broadly below.

1. Clearly communicate expectations for students, teachers, and parents so District expectations are clear across stakeholder groups.
2. Provide concise communication with information available in one central location (website and/or handbook).
3. Students need explicit instruction related to social and emotional learning. Schools should plan to address the social and emotional needs of students and staff upon school reopening.
4. The majority of parents and teachers indicated a preference for more live instruction, teachers with students in real time.
5. Nearly 90% of parent participants indicated they could provide student transportation to and from school if that made a physical return possible.
6. Schedules need to be examined to make sure they are meeting the needs of learners of all abilities. Schedules should allow for ample teacher collaboration time in an eLearning setting.
7. All students should have access to technology and materials to be successful with eLearning.
8. Professional learning should be relevant to meet the needs of staff under different working conditions.
9. Consider innovative or out-of-the-box approaches to teaching and learning to meet student needs in a non-traditional classroom setting.

SUBCOMMITTEE OVERVIEWS

Teaching & Learning

The *Teaching & Learning Subcommittee* examined experiences both in and outside the classroom with an understanding that a return to school requires flexibility and innovative planning to meet the needs of all stakeholders. Recommendations consider multiple variables including the likelihood that some students and teachers will not return in the fall. In addition to the four DRS meetings, the *Teaching & Learning Subcommittee* met twice more to collaboratively offer recommendations connecting to the focus areas indicated below.

Teaching & Learning Subcommittee Areas of Focus

1. Develop plans for instruction and assessment across a variety of scenarios (traditional start to school, distance learning, hybrid model).
2. Solidify delivery approach of intervention services across a variety of platforms.
3. Provide input regarding scope & sequence and pacing guides.
4. Develop a plan for professional learning/development that supports district and teachers' needs for the upcoming school year.
5. Identify resources to support high-quality instruction through technology.
6. Work with *Health and Wellness Subcommittee* to embed social-emotional learning opportunities across curricula.

Teaching & Learning Recommendations:

Instruction

- A. Establish curriculum guides with flexibility for in-school and remote learning scenarios.
- B. Embed virtual learning experiences in school to prepare students for a potential return to remote learning and integrate students who are learning from home.
- C. Create plans for what are typically shared equipment and instructional supplies (e.g. art, math manipulatives, science labs, library books).
- D. Create opportunities for students to work collaboratively within social distancing guidelines.
- E. Integrate digital small group instruction using videos during class time to support differentiation and allow time for teachers to assess students.
- F. Create student schedules adhering to cohorts wherever possible. Consider using blended learning to maintain cohorts and avoid increased tracking/leveling of students.
- G. Consider reduced class sizes at the primary level to manage the developmental challenges with navigating learning physically and emotionally.
- H. Build time into the schedule that supports healthy behaviors and practices for physical cleanliness, safety, and social and emotional learning needs.
- I. Create specific recommendations for vocal and instrumental music including alternative activities for group singing and wind playing. Establish larger physical space where possible in order for students to have access to high-quality music learning experiences.

- J. Minimize conditions for bringing large groups of adults together (e.g. faculty meetings, team meetings, department meetings, new teacher orientation, professional development) and schedule virtually.

Social and Emotional Well-Being and Support

- A. Embed SEL as an interdisciplinary effort by explicitly teaching skills (self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, empathy, and responsible decision-making) across all content areas.
- B. Revisit grading practices related to remote learning.
- C. Provide staff and families with explicit instructions for opening school and transitioning to remote learning if needed.
- D. Create an explicit SEL timeline/pacing that can also be integrated into the curriculum context.
- E. Provide students and families with video guidance that will prepare students for their return to school.
- F. Maintain consistent expectations for families of students opting for remote learning.

Assessment & Intervention

- A. Create pacing guides and assessment calendars to accommodate various learning scenarios.
- B. Consider creating an assessment team to support classroom teachers with Running Records and Aimsweb prioritizing incoming first grade students who are most at risk for summer slide.
- C. Administer diagnostic assessments within the first six weeks of school thoughtfully and with consideration of SEL needs.
- D. Utilize a variety of informal assessments to begin the year including interest inventories, individual conferences, and observations.
- E. Provide teachers with longitudinal student data to create individual student profiles.
- F. Identify time for vertical meetings to support successful transitions including Tier 1 SRBI review.
- G. Develop a plan to manage and support students with frequent absences.

Professional Learning

- A. Identify time, prior to the start of school, for teachers to provide input regarding the physical layout and management of their classrooms.
- B. Work with media specialists and Director of Instructional Technology to identify common software and needed training.
- C. Provide teachers with explicit professional learning about health and safety guidelines including social distancing, wearing of masks, and physically navigating buildings safely.
- D. Focus opening professional development practically. Stay focused on health, safety, and SEL needs.
- E. Allocate additional paid time (at least one half day) for fifth grade teachers who are beginning a new math curriculum this year if time cannot otherwise be allocated.
- F. Minimally, make the first full week of school ½ days for students. This will provide professional learning time in the afternoon for all staff.
- G. Build time into the schedule that supports additional collaborative time for teacher teams.
- H. Assign a weekly half day for professional development and teacher collaboration.
- I. Develop a system for teacher feedback even if formal systems are not in place from the CSDE (Connecticut State Department of Education).
- J. Professional learning from outside providers must be delivered remotely and recorded when possible.
- K. Establish protocols for department and curriculum leaders when visiting buildings.
- L. Avoid all field trips for the remainder of 2020.

Special Education

The special education subcommittee focused primarily on management and operations to support a safe return to school for students receiving special services. Supporting the needs of students receiving special services, however, was not limited to this group as students who receive special education services are general education students first. The list below highlights focus areas of the subcommittee with a shared understanding that recommendations from all subcommittees also apply to students receiving special services.

Special Education Subcommittee Areas of Focus

1. Work with CSDE and Bureau of Special Education departments to remain aligned with best practices in providing and evaluating special education services with fidelity.
2. Identify a District practice regarding the identification or screening of social and emotional concerns related to the school closure or the reentry to school.
3. Work collaboratively with families and community members to outline unique concerns related to student reentry.
4. Develop structures and recommendations for assessing reentry baselines of students' IEP goals and objectives.
5. Work collaboratively with local, state, and federal agencies to develop recommendations for the completion of IEP processes (PPT meetings, outstanding evaluations, delayed referrals, and compliance timelines) without impacting instruction.
6. Collaborate with building administration and general education staff to design credit/instructional recovery opportunities for all students.

Special Education Recommendations:

Classroom Space

- A. Allocate and reconfigure spaces to accommodate small group instruction adhering to social distancing guidelines.
- B. Accommodate equipment needs to deliver all special and related services.
- C. Maintain appropriate spaces to support students with special health needs.

Bathroom Usage

- A. Provide training for paraprofessionals and staff who assist with toileting with consult of the Director of Nursing.
- B. Develop district protocols in accordance with health guidelines.
- C. Allocate bathrooms for student(s) who require assistance at all levels.

PPTs

- A. Create a PPT schedule that accommodates both the spring and fall meeting schedules.
- B. Maintain virtual PPTs for the health and safety of students and staff.

- C. Facilitate PPTs remotely.
- D. Limit staff to 2-3 in one conference space at a time; join remotely from office/classroom.
- E. Purchase additional conference room cameras for use at each building.

Cohorts

- A. Carefully develop student and staff schedules to adhere to cohorting practices in each school and minimize transitions.
- B. Ensure cohorting practices allow for students to receive services in alignment with their IEPs.

Lunch/Snacks & Feeding Students

- A. Adhere to ASHA (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association) protocols for feeding safety in consultation with the Director of Nursing and Director of Facilities.
- B. Practice appropriate handling of food in preparation and delivery with consideration of those with allergies and other special health needs.

Face Coverings & PPE

- A. Utilize ESY opportunities for students to practice wearing masks.
- B. Order masks with clear windows for lip reading in support of students with hearing impairment or speech related disabilities.
- C. Explore opportunities for clear face shields for support of students in DLC, ALC, EXCEL
- D. Provide PPE for staff for feeding and swallowing in addition to 'close contact' services providers (oral motor, OT/PT, SLP)

Transportation (Arrival and Dismissal)

- A. Identify safe locations for students who require accessibility features to access the building.
- B. Staggering entrance and exit of students, possible assigned times for drop off and pick up.
- C. Temperature-taking if required by State guidance, in consultation with Health Services

Evaluations

- A. Dedicate classroom or office space to service providers to conduct in-person evaluations.
- B. Develop a plan to manage evaluations resulting from our extended school closure this spring.

Restraint and Seclusion Protocols

- A. Provide appropriate PPE to include gloves, gowns, face shields.
- B. Provide professional development for staff on protocols and safe practices.

Operations

A well-developed operations plan serves as the foundation for the success for a safe reopening of schools. Recommendations of the Operations Subcommittee reflect collaborations across subcommittees, careful review of guiding documents, and thoughtful consideration of feasibility.

Operations Subcommittee Areas of Focus

1. Project expenditures using a variety of scenarios reflecting a traditional or non-traditional start to school.
2. Work with Transportation, Food Services and vendors to remain current with expectations related to contracted services.
3. Assess and plan for district needs related to systems technology, student access to technology, and teacher access to technology.
4. Collaborate with unions to negotiate the impact of any changes to working conditions.
5. Work with legal counsel when appropriate to address questions related to liability.
6. Determine how space may be utilized across the district to accommodate social distancing and class size.
7. Update policies regarding athletics and extracurricular activities when feasible.
8. Develop protocols related to safety and cleanliness of buildings amidst health crisis.
9. Establish procedural resources that clearly articulate what to expect when school resumes (transportation, hand washing, mask wearing, etc.).

Operations Recommendations:

Finance

- A. Model projected expenditures for items including but not limited to PPE's, sanitizing the buildings, additional staffing implications and food delivery.
- B. Select a new food service management company. Companies have developed plans for multiple food delivery options including traditional cafeteria locations, auxiliary locations, classroom delivery.
 - a. Recommendation will be to use disposable food service items (utensils, dishes, etc)
 - b. Individually plated meals

Social Distancing

- C. Maximize social distancing at a minimum of 3 feet according to appropriate guidelines. Desks should be separated either physically or with partitions. Markings will be put on the floor to allow for spacing between the teacher and students. Explore the option of using additional spaces (i.e., gym, cafeteria) for classrooms or service providers.

Tracking and Hygiene

- D. Develop protocols for tracking and tracing illness as well as protocols for closing (schools or cohorts) if someone tests positive for COVID-19.

- E. Inspect and upgrade, if necessary, all HVAC systems and air conditioning window units in order to provide appropriate ventilation and air filtering in all DPS buildings.
- F. Limit use of shared spaces and no sharing of materials unless unavoidable.
- G. Clean and disinfect shared spaces between uses.
- H. Teach and reinforce hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Hand washing stations are being looked at for disbursement to schools.

Masking

- I. Provide staff with two reusable face masks at the start of the year.
- J. Make face masks available on each bus in the event that a student forgets theirs.
- K. Distribute face masks (both adult and child size) to schools for those students/staff who don't remember their masks.
- L. Remind all students and school personnel that they must wear a face mask while on school property if less than 6 feet from another individual.
- M. Ask parents to provide masks for their children; staff will be asked to provide their own mask daily, however the schools will provide a mask for any student or staff if needed.

Sanitation Procedures

- N. Post signage in highly visible locations (school entrances, restrooms, gyms, cafeterias, hallways).
- O. Provide the following services to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 Virus with the Darien Public Schools custodial staff:
 - Use of disinfectant on touch surfaces
 - Restrooms cleaned regularly
 - Soap dispensers and towel holders filled regularly
 - Water fountains to be shut off
 - Student desks should be clear at the end of the day to promote cleaning
 - Hand sanitizer to be placed in each classroom
 - Signage throughout schools reminding everyone to physically distance and wash hands.
- P. Discontinue the use of drinking fountains
- Q. Develop a plan for movement within schools that maximizes social distancing (i.e., signs for one-way halls)

Visitation

- R. Explore high volume common spaces in buildings (i.e., offices) to minimize social contact (i.e., plexiglass dividers, limit or prohibit visitors).
- S. Limit visitors and volunteers in the buildings; continue with virtual meetings when possible.

Needs of Staff

- T. Provide professional development for all staff prior to the start of school relating to self-care, hand-washing, social distancing and other areas related to new procedures this school year.
- U. Determine proper mechanism for collecting input on staff unable to work in person this year.

Transportation

- V. Operate buses as normal with enhanced cleaning protocols including disinfecting all touch surfaces after each run.
- W. Send parents an opt-in/opt-out form in an effort to reduce volume of riders.
- X. Require all students and drivers to wear face coverings while on the bus.
- Y. Students will board the bus and fill the seats from back to front.

Health and Wellness

The *Health and Wellness Subcommittee* focused on the needs of our students, staff, and families as we transition back to school. This group looked at supporting all stakeholders both in and outside of the school settings. Recommendations regarding health & wellness are based on the focus areas indicated below.

Health & Wellness Subcommittee Areas of Focus

1. Audit internal resources and external partnerships to determine how they provide support related to the social and emotional health of staff and students.
2. Assess the need for additional resources to support the social and emotional health of staff and students.
3. Provide recommendations to embed social and emotional learning opportunities for students within curriculum and interventions systems.
4. Provide resources for staff self-care.
5. Develop a voluntary system for check-ins regarding staff wellness.
6. Provide resources for parents related to best practices in talking with children.

Health and Wellness Recommendations:

Internal Resources & External Partnerships

- A. Ensure staff and families are aware of external partnerships and community resources.
- B. Continue partnership with Mobile Crisis 211 and Child guidance: <https://childguidancect.org/>
- C. Continue relationship with Darien Human Services
- D. Explore community-based health/wellness (fitness) supports
- E. Support professional development for staff:
 - a. Implementation of SEL curriculum
 - b. Recognizing the signs of trauma in children and adolescents
 - c. Modeling hygiene and cleanliness protocols
 - d. Handling students “accusing” others of having Covid (ex: my child said you were coughing, student notices another coughing, etc.)
 - e. Reviewing calendar to add additional professional development time

Embedding SEL

- A. Consider the use of a universal screener or implementation of an informal screening tool for monitoring student social and emotional health/wellbeing: [Best Practices in Universal Screening](#). Establish a “check in” person (Classroom teacher, school counselor, school psychologists, school social worker, advisory/FLEX teacher) for each student AND frequent live check ins per week.
- B. Create a pacing guide/scope & sequence for delivery of [K-5 SEL curriculum](#) to ensure implementation.
- C. Consider additions to K-5 SEL curriculum.
- D. Formalize 6-12 SEL activities into curriculum and create a pacing guide/scope & sequence for delivery of 6-12 SEL curriculum - (MS advisory and 6-12 school counselors have this).
- E. Consider adding additional/frequent advisory check-ins for first weeks of school.

- F. Implement SEL during Advisory FLEX at MMS on a weekly basis for all students.
- G. Implement SEL during Advisory/Guidance seminar at DHS for all students.
- H. Consider scheduling students for a guidance seminar “Check-in” for the beginning of the school year.
- I. Develop additional lessons for the start of the year related to school closure, current/ongoing events, and student experience for all school levels.
- J. Review current SRBI bx practices:
 - a. Implement consistent practices for SRBI-Bx across all school levels
 - b. Create SRBI-Bx manual for staff
 - c. Consider use of specific resource for guiding SRBI-Bx goals
- K. Develop a plan for teaching for students/families/staff on sensitivity on medical issues (ex: student/family/staff response to someone in school coughing, etc.)
- L. Adapt opportunities for Kindergarten/Pre-K students:
 - a. Begin in stages, shortened day
 - b. Pictures of staff without masks
 - c. Small groups come to “meet teacher”
- M. Offer orientation options/protocols
 - a. Virtual orientation for K, 6, 9
 - b. Establish a plan for students new to the District?
 - c. Provide pictures of staff without masks
 - d. Instruction on how to use PPE/hygiene and cleanliness protocols: [NYT article](#)

Staff Self Care & Wellness

- A. Continue consultation with CBC (Cognitive & Behavioral Consultants)
 - a. DBT (Dialectical Behavior Therapy) for mental health staff (meetings every other week with consultant)
 - b. Consider provision of DBT consultation for staff or series of DBT PD talks
- B. Require all staff to attend EAP (Employee Assistance Program) education class at the beginning of year.
- C. Encourage the use of EAP (Employee Assistance Program) for staff in need:
 - a. Confidential Member counseling, information or help available at 1-800-252-4555 or 1-800-225-2527
 - b. Mental Health and Grief resources in COVID at <https://www.theeap.com/wellness/mental-health-awareness-in-the-time-of-covid19>
 - c. Wellness Blog at <https://www.theeap.com/wellness-blog>
- D. Set clear expectations for staff attendance (guidelines for when should staff stay home)
- E. Create “Backup Plans” for when an employee needs to stay home/out sick.
- F. Explore community-based child care resources
- G. Consider building-based social opportunities for staff

Resources for Families

- A. Review access to translators - how can we make this available to families?
- B. Create PTO or District “parent series” via Zoom (mornings and evenings)
- C. Continue with administrator communication/inclusion of wellness resources for families
 - a. ES: weekly theme based on CASEL standards: Mindful Monday activity, Wednesday Wellness activity, tips for parents
 - b. MS: consider using weekly FLEX/Advisory SEL theme to send tips for parents
 - c. HS: consider parent tips related to SEL themes
 - d. Should this be from district to streamline?

- e. Parent resources
- D. Provide parent training on recognizing the signs of trauma in children
- E. Offer opportunities for parent DBT training
- F. Explore community-based child care resources

Communications

While clear and consistent communication is always a goal, the need is exacerbated during these unprecedented times. The *Communications Subcommittee* considered strategies to streamline practices and calibrate expectations for all stakeholder groups. Recommendations from the *Communications Subcommittee* are based on the focus areas below.

Communications Subcommittee Areas of Focus

1. Develop a system of communication to keep families, students, and staff informed of district plans and practices for school reopening.
2. Aggregate information from subcommittees to inform communication.
3. Provide oversight and support of surveys that may inform large group or subcommittee work.
4. Support other subcommittees where needed.

Communications Recommendations:

- A. Create simple, daily schedules for each school (block at DHS, five day at elementary) to quickly adapt to potential school closures.
- B. Create a communication handbook for each school. The handbook should contain expectations for communication platforms, timing of communications from the school to home, how to access student grades, and how to communicate with faculty and staff.
- C. Update student / faculty handbooks for expected behaviors in safe “in school” learning.
- D. Design Google Classrooms at the start of the school year.
- E. Migrate to a single platform for communication needs (i.e.; migrate email and calendars to Google). Use Zoom for synchronous communication.
- F. Establish consistent online learning platforms that students become familiar with from the start of school.
- G. Create a bank of parent training modules to support clear understanding of communication systems and expectations.
- H. Explore Google classroom integration with ASPEN to easily view student grades and assignments.
- I. Research tools for parents to view information from Google Classroom without providing “full” access to the class.
- J. Manage the school website as a knowledge management tool to archive announcements, updates from the district / each school.
- K. Continue to encourage all important district information to be sent via parents and staff via email/text message and archived on the district website.
- L. Establish and regularly reinforce health and safety information, including HIPAA reminders to manage potential misinformation, rumors and unkind behavior. Create a regularly scheduled health update (2 x weekly, 1 x monthly etc.) to families and staff.

- M. Update the district “chain of communication” workflow posted on the district website. The updates should include school nurses alongside all staff members.
https://www.darienps.org/pdfs/Chain_of_Communication_10152015.pdf
- N. Establish clear professional learning opportunities before the school year begins for training on communication tools and discussion of the expectations to start the year.
- O. Create a professional learning opportunity for special education and related service providers to connect with legal counsel and educational professionals on best practices for communication in the “covid-era”

MOVING FORWARD

Recommendations from the DRS Task Force reflect many hours of collaborative work and creative thinking. These recommendations coupled with guiding documents from the CSDE will support district and school administrators in the development of the Darien’s Reopening Schools Plan. Next steps in the process include:

1. Administrative review of the DRS Task Force recommendations and CSDE guidelines.
2. Follow up with clarifying questions from administrators to DRS Task Force members.
3. Completion of various stakeholder focus groups for additional feedback.
4. Draft DPS Reopening Plan.
5. Finalize plan and submit to CSDE on or before July 24th.

DRS TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP

Alan Addley, Superintendent of Schools

Teaching & Learning

Candace Crabill, Kindergarten Hindley School
 Joslyn Delancey, Grade 5 Tokeneke School, DEA President
 Christian Dockum, 6-12 Director of Science
 Julie Droller, Hindley School Principal
 Jessica Easter, Royle School Special Education
 Cory Gillette, Elementary Curriculum Director
 Linda Johnson, Elementary Curriculum Director
 Keith Keeler, 6-12 Director of Social Studies
 Joan McGettigan*, Director of Instructional Technology
 Shelley Somers, Middlesex Middle School Principal
 Christopher Tranberg*, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction
 Andrew Turriago, Middlesex Middle School - English

Special Education

Paula Bleakley, Holmes Principal
 Theresa Fox, Middlesex Middle School SESS Department Chair
 Shirley Klein*, Assistant Superintendent of SESS
 Taylor Kurtz, Secondary School Psychologist
 Liz Markham, Grade 1 Royle School
 Scott McCarthy*, Secondary Program Director SESS
 Kristin O'Reilly, Elementary Program Director SESS
 Heather Reilley, DLC
 Jessica Sprague, Ox Ridge School Special Education
 Christina Ulreich, Ox Ridge Assistant Principal

Operations

Jeff Adams, Director of Systems Technology
 Alicia Casucci, Director of Nursing
 Marge Cion*, Director of Human Resources
 Jen Fischer, Grade 3 Ox Ridge School
 Dan Kensek, Middlesex Middle School Math Specialist
 Mike Lynch, Director of Facilities
 Chris Manfredonia, Director of Athletics
 Mary Michelson, Tokeneke School Principal
 Tara Ochman, Board of Education Chair
 Paul Ribeiro, Darien High School Assistant Principal
 Rich Rudl*, Director of Finance & Operations

Health & Wellness

Susan Atkinson, Tokeneke School Special Education
Greg Darin, Darien High School Technology Education
Meghan Emanuelson, Director of School Counseling
Jennifer Ki, Elementary School Psychologist
Jessica Markus, ELP
Garan Mullin*, Royle School Principal
Ann Novotnik, Second Grade Holmes School
Mary Scalise*, Middlesex Assistant Principal
Kate Williamson, Secondary School Psychologist

Communications

Dennis Cabrera, Fitch Academy Lead Teacher/Social Studies
Mallory Consonery, Art Tokeneke School
Kate Curcio, Darien High School SLP
Ellen Dunn*, Darien High School Principal
Luke Forshaw*, Ox Ridge Principal
Rebecca Laus, Hindley School Assistant Principal
Nadine Vasil, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools

RESOURCES

The following resources served as guiding documents for the DRS Task Force. These resources offered organizational direction and guidance specific to the task force subcommittees and focus areas. CSDE primary guiding document, *Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together*, was published during the final week of scheduled Task Force meetings. This document and subsequent guidance from state and federal agencies will continue to inform decisions for a safe reopening of the Darien Public Schools.

[Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together](#)

[A Blueprint for Back to School](#)

[The Connecticut Interscholastic Conference Resocialization of Interscholastic Athletics and Activities Program Guidelines](#)

[Covid-19 and Beyond: Guidelines for Connecticut's K-12 Arts Programs](#)

[Reopen Connecticut: Safer. Stronger. Together.](#)

[Return to School Roadmap](#)

Darien Athletics

To: Darien Board of Education
CC: Alan Addley
From: Chris Manfredonia
Date: July 16, 2020
Re: Update on Athletics

As an extracurricular program at Darien High School, DHS Athletics reflect the established mission of our school community:

We, the members of the Darien High School community, believe that learning best occurs in an environment that is safe, supportive, respectful, and intellectually challenging for all students, one that promotes personal excellence through active, collaborative, and creative thinking; individual growth; and development of the skills and integrity necessary to become productive members of society.

Athletic programs are designed to enhance the learning that takes place inside our classrooms and provide experiences for our athletes and spectators that build community, celebrate accomplishment, forge friendships and promote sportsmanship. In order to accomplish these things, clear expectations are set and practices are established that ensure excellence in our program. Discussions with the Board of Education in the past have addressed equity, fundraising, budgeting, assignment of coaches, and the practice of cutting in the athletic program. Maintaining equity in our athletic program is important to ensuring the needs of our athletes and teams are being met. Equity in the DHS athletic program ensures that an equal number of sports are being offered on both the male & female side, as well as fully accommodating the underrepresented gender, which would be females, in the case of athletics. The Darien Public Schools are proud to be able to offer athletic programs that are compliant with Title IX by offering an equal number of athletic programs for both males & females, as well as funding for all programs, both via the BOE budget process as well as through fundraising efforts. The additional cheerleading coach allocated by the Board this past budget cycle would be an example of the BOE complying with Title IX. The community of Darien has also been generous to the athletic programs at the high school. Outside organizations such as the Blue Wave Booster Club as well as the Darien Athletic Foundation have provided both the “nice to haves” for our athletic teams, as well as improved upon the infrastructure of the high school facility by providing for all teams; a video scoreboard, fully functional concession stand, running path, media coverage of our athletic teams, as well as two additional turf fields.

All DHS coaches are required to follow both CIAC and district rules and regulations as it pertains to our student athletes both inside and outside their athletic season. Additionally, many DHS coaches are involved in the youth leagues of Darien, making that connection to the high school program. The DHS Athletic Department assures that once a student has entered into DHS, and become part of an athletic program, they are treated equitably and fairly, regardless of what youth organization they participated in previously, or not.

What follows is a comprehensive look at the policies, practices, guidelines, and structures that have been put in place to ensure that the athletic program at Darien HS is Title IX compliant, is in step with Darien Public Schools policies & procedures, and meets the needs of the student/athletes our school district serves. Additionally, at the conclusion of this document are some recommendations to continue to move the DHS Athletic Department forward in the future.

During previous reviews of Darien Athletics, a number of significant changes, and/or additions have been made to the operations within the DHS Athletic Department. Those changes include:

- [Creation of a 3-year Uniform Replacement Cycle](#)
- Development of a [coach to student ratio](#) by sport, to guide decisions regarding coaching staff needs
- Development of a [Captains Parent Handbook](#) to better communicate the policies & procedures that govern the DHS athletic department, specifically as it relates to fundraising.
- Creation of a [Rental Comparison Table](#), showing the contributions from both the BOE and families for those sports that require rental fees.
- [Survey of area schools](#) to determine which schools cut vs don't cut in a particular athletic program, as well as number of coaches supported by their BOE.
- Updated the [Captain Selection Process](#) utilized by each athletic program when selecting captains for the next season.

Darien HS offers a comprehensive, competitive athletic program for all its student athletes. Darien is steeped in its athletic traditions, and has a community that supports its teams through a variety of resources. Whether on the varsity or sub-varsity level, participants have the opportunity to acquire a high level of fitness, practice self-discipline, experience collaboration and foster teamwork. The DHS athletic program is designed to prepare students to meet challenges, make decisions and accept responsibility for the decisions they make. DHS is committed to providing opportunities for organized athletic participation at all levels of ability and interest.

POLICIES & PRACTICES RELATED TO ATHLETICS

As referred to above, the Darien HS Athletic Department is guided by a number of program policies, procedures and guidelines when making decisions. In addition, these departmental procedures meet the expectations set by the Darien Board of Education policy as it pertains to [Interscholastic Athletics](#), as well the [coaches](#) it employs. By comparison, the New Canaan school district policy on coaches can be found [here](#). As you can see, both are similar in nature.

Cut vs No-Cut

In order to offer a comprehensive interscholastic athletic program, it is sometimes necessary to cut students in some sports. In recent years, the athletic department has made a concerted effort to keep as many freshmen on teams as possible. The decision to limit squad size may be caused by one or more of the following factors:

1. Safety - considering the space available and the player/coach ratio.
2. Time Limitations - considering the schedule and time restrictions and whether there is a reasonable opportunity for active participation in practice or games.
3. Budget Limitations - considering the costs of transportation and equipment.

When asked to look at the DHS Athletic policy on cutting, the athletic department surveyed some area schools to determine what other districts do when deciding to cut athletes within a program. Additionally, area districts were asked about the number of coaches provided by their Boards of Education. The data derived from this survey includes information from other schools and the 19/20 school year from DHS (fall & winter season only) as well as the 18/19 school year for the DHS spring season. A link to those results can be found [here](#).

Equity of Programs: BOE Funding and Fundraising

A responsibility of the athletic department is ensuring there is equity among its programs and that the needs of all are being met by both internal (Board of Education) and external funding (fundraising). In most instances, the BOE provides all essential equipment to its athletic teams through the operating budget. Teams will either hold a fundraiser, and/or ask for optional parent contributions for those items that are considered nice to have, that are not covered by the BOE

budget. A link to those items, as well as which teams participate in fundraising, and/or ask for a parental contribution, can be found in the provided [link](#). All monies collected, whether through fundraising, or through optional parent contributions, are deposited into that team's student activity account. Attached is the [Student Activity Manual](#). As a comparison, the New Canaan school district's policy on student activity accounts can be found [here](#). If teams request an optional parental contribution, or a fundraiser event, all requests must be [approved](#) by the Director of Athletics first, and follow the guidelines set forth in the Captains Parent Handbook. A link to those student account balances, including any earmarked monies, can be found [here](#). Additionally, the BOE collects fees for the following sports, to help off-set the rental costs associated with that sport, or in the case of sailing, to purchase new boats every 7-8 years: b hockey, g hockey, squash, skiing & sailing. A process is in place for those students who need financial assistance with these payments through the guidance department.

Number of Coaches in a Program

Recently, the DHS athletic program did an analysis of its athletic programs to determine the appropriate number of coaches needed to effectively and safely operate a team. This analysis included looking at some area schools to see what their ratios are for coaches to students. The results of those findings can be found [here](#), as well as at the beginning of this memo. There are several factors that went into determining how many coaches are appropriate to adequately coach and supervise our athletic programs, including, but not limited to:

- risk of injury
- equipment needs
- number of participants

Transportation

The athletic office will provide bus transportation to all away contests. If a coach decides they would like the comfort of a coach bus for an away contest, that team must pay the difference between what a school bus would cost vs the coach bus. Payment for these types of trips must be made through the teams student activity account. Coaches must request buses for all contests far in advance and understand transportation may not be provided if requests occur at the last moment. On those days when enough school buses are not available to service the needs of the athletic department, a coach bus may be secured to transport a team to its destination. In this

instance, the team's student activity account would not be charged for this trip. Decisions on which teams would be issued the coach bus would be made by the athletic department and take into consideration such factors as team size and length of trip. A certified coach must ride buses with their athletes to and from athletic contests unless an arrangement is made with the athletic director ahead of time. If a parent is picking up their child after a game or off-site practice, a note must be provided ahead of time. A parent can only take their own child in their own car. If a parent is going to drive other children, additional documentation must be provided to the athletic office ahead of time, including the driver's license, car registration and car insurance card as well as permission from the child's parent.

Summary

In summary, the Darien High School Athletic Department takes pride in its ability to offer robust programs in which a majority of our students participate. It is mindful of being Title IX compliant, following all BOE policies, and employing its own policies and procedures consistently. Our coaches stress commitment, dedication and hard work to the students they serve, allowing our athletes to apply these attributes to real life situations. The educational value of athletics lies in how our students cope with these challenges. Competitive athletics play an integral part in the educational program at Darien High School. The athletic program serves as an extension of the classroom, giving students the opportunity to learn, outside the classroom walls.

After going through this exercise of reviewing the policies and procedures as it relates to athletics, the following recommendations are made:

1. Review of the Student Activity Manual, last updated in 2015
2. Review of the policy on fundraising as it pertains to athletics.
3. Review and update the [Coaches Handbook](#)
4. Provide additional opportunities for professional development for DHS coaches