



# RETURN-TO-SCHOOL

## COVID-19 PROTOCOLS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

### HEALTH & SAFETY

#### 1. What will the district's quarantine procedures be for 2021-2022?

The following is subject to change based on updated guidance from the CDC or DPH:

- Students who have tested positive for COVID-19 cannot attend in-person learning for a period of 10 days.
- Vaccinated "Close Contacts" will not be required to quarantine if they are asymptomatic. Notification of exposure will be sent to "Close Contacts." Vaccinated "Close Contacts" will need to mask indoors for 14 days following exposure when masking is not mandated. A negative test after Day 5 will eliminate the need for masking of "Close Contacts" when masking is no longer required.
- Unvaccinated students who are "Close Contacts" in the schools will be required to quarantine for 10 days (return on day 11):
  - 7 day quarantine period with a negative COVID-19 test on day 5 or after (return on day 8), or 10 day quarantine (return on day 11) without a negative COVID-19 test;

Note: This is current DPH guidance; however, we are awaiting further guidance on this matter, as well as, guidance from our local health district.

- Student-Athletes will need to follow CIAC Quarantine Guidelines for Athletics Participation.

#### 2. What is the definition of a Close Contact?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has limited the scope of who qualifies as a Close Contact in PreK-12 schools where face masking occurs. As noted in the parent presentation on August 18, a Close Contact in schools is defined as:

*"In the K–12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) if both the infected student and the exposed student(s) correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time."*

*(CDC, 2021)*

#### 3. How will families of Close Contacts be notified?

For 2021-2022, there will be no districtwide communications regarding COVID-19 cases unless there is a significant increase in cases within a school or schools. In terms of those deemed Close Contacts, families will be called to inform them that their child has been identified as a Close Contact. A notification will also be sent to all families/staff within the classroom of the COVID-19 positive students/staff member when a case is confirmed.

**4. Is there a vaccination requirement for students who are age-eligible?**

The State of Connecticut has not issued a vaccine requirement for students who may be age-eligible. We are not anticipating that this will occur; however, the district will update families if it becomes a vaccination requirement.

**5. What should I do if my child has come into a confirmed case of COVID-19 outside of the school day?**

If your child comes into contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 outside the school day, please notify the school office and/or school nurse as soon as possible.

**6. What are the protocols for when a student presents with COVID-related symptoms and is sent home? When will they be allowed back to school?**

If a student is ill and goes home, and if they see their physician and their physician makes a discrete diagnosis, such as strep throat, once that child/staff member is fever free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, the individual can return to school. If there is not a discrete diagnosis, then there is the possibility that the individual could have COVID-19. The protocol for returning to school will be 10 days out of school and fever free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication and symptoms have greatly improved or documentation presented of two negative COVID-19 tests at least 24 hours apart.

If a person is asymptomatic, but has been exposed to someone with COVID-19, there is a 10-day quarantine period. If a person is positive for COVID-19, the self-isolation period is 10 days and until there are no symptoms (medication free) for 24 hours.

**7. If there is a positive case and students are identified as Close Contacts and sent home, will those students have the ability to attend school online?**

Yes, students who are designated as Close Contacts will be permitted to access classroom livestream lessons. The Suffield Public Schools will not begin case-base-case reviewing and designating district-based quarantines with the option to access remote learning until Wednesday, September 8, 2021. Until that point, students will receive academic support from designating (non-classroom) faculty and staff.

A student who receives a district designation as a Close Contact will not be marked absent so long as they access their online lessons throughout the school day. Teachers in classrooms with district designated quarantines or isolations will have their cameras on in the classroom.

**8. Can a parent keep their child home (self-quarantine) if someone else in the classroom has tested positive for COVID-19?**

Yes. However, any student that is not designated as a Close Contact by the school district and is not attending in-person will be marked absent. Teachers will not be required to turn on their cameras if there are no district designated quarantines or isolations.

**9. Will facemasks be provided by the district?**

Reusable face masks will be provided to students and staff if necessary. Both students and staff are welcome to wear their own masks.

**10. I am concerned about the feasibility of students wearing masks and disagree with the universal face-mask mandate. Can I just send my child to school without a mask?**

As set forth in the Governor’s Executive Order 13A, everyone who is vaccinated or unvaccinated must wear masks in school. The district is very committed to providing in-person learning to students, and mask-wearing is one of the most important strategies we have to minimizing the spread of transmission in our schools – which can lead to keeping our schools operating. The best protection we have against spreading and contracting COVID-19 in schools is wearing masks, washing hands, social distancing, and contact tracing. These layered prevention strategies will greatly assist us in keeping the Suffield Public Schools open to students throughout the school year.

**11. Are masks required to be worn in the classroom? What if a student can’t wear a mask due to a medical condition?**

Yes, the state guidelines require that masks must be worn in classrooms by students and staff. If a student’s IEP or 504 plan includes the exclusion of wearing a mask, then that student will not be required to wear a mask. Proper documentation from a medical professional will need to be submitted to the district. We will work with the family in order to mitigate the risk to other students.

**12. How will mask breaks be planned?**

When students are outside and physically distanced, it is alright for students to remove their masks. Mask breaks will be done outside or in large indoor areas to ensure the physical distancing of students. Masks will not be worn while sitting at the lunch tables or while outdoors, and on playgrounds.

**13. Is there a certain type of mask that is better than others?**

Any mask is fine as long as it covers the nose and mouth and stays in place. The district will be following further guidance from healthcare professionals regarding proper masks.

**14. Will there be separate classrooms for students who can’t wear a mask?**

No – all students will be in their assigned classrooms.

**15. How will social distancing be addressed on buses?**

It is not possible to properly social distance students on buses, but we are following the guidelines of the state that transportation needs to be provided. However, the measures being taken to reduce risk is students will be required to wear masks on the bus.

**16. How will wearing of face masks be enforced?**

Expectations and stressing of the importance of wearing masks will be communicated to students. Parents having these conversations with their children to prepare them will be helpful as well. The district hopes to maintain an open line of communication regarding the wearing of face masks, and we are asking for your support with this initiative. We

certainly understand and respect the different opinions on wearing face masks, and will continue to monitor and assess their need within our schools.

**17. Can students wear masks with personalized prints, such as sports teams?**

Yes, as long as it meets the dress code. Inappropriate messages on masks will be subject to removal, of which a district issued mask will be provided. Parents are encouraged to purchase multiple reusable masks for cleaning purposes.

**18. If a family is traveling to another state will students be required to quarantine?**

At this point, there are no travel restrictions that will require a student or staff member to quarantine if they travel to another state.

**19. Will there be social distancing in classrooms?**

With all students returning to their classrooms, the district will socially distance students to the greatest extent possible. We will continue to educate our students on how to maintain a safe space while in the classrooms, hallways, cafeteria, and outdoors.

**20. Will temperature checks be done?**

The district will not be doing random monitoring of student temperatures.

**21. What is involved in the monitoring of cohorts when a COVID-19 case has been confirmed?**

If there is a confirmed case, the administration and our nurses will be closely monitoring the situation. In addition, summary data is being maintained and reported to the Department of Public Health with each Suffield Public Schools confirmed case.

**22. How will the typical flu season be addressed?**

Since the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are very similar, nurses will be very cautious in monitoring student/staff illness. This will be challenging and we will be seeking guidance from local health officials.

**23. Has there been consideration for staff to use a symptom checklist to monitor students?**

Nurses will be doing this for students who visit the office ill.

**24. Will nurses have the authority to send students home if they return to school too early after an illness or come to school ill?**

Yes, the district will be following the illness protocols it has utilized in previous years.

**25. Can students bring their own hand sanitizer to school?**

No. This is a safety precaution as the district has to be aware of the chemicals occurring on school grounds.

**26. Will protocols be the same for students with allergies?**

Yes

## **SCHOOL OPERATIONS**

- 1. The plan calls for keeping classroom doors open for ventilation purposes; however, isn't that in conflict with the school safety measures that have been put in place over the last few years?**

The rationale to allow for doors to remain open is that the more imminent risk is to virus. In addition, the district is following the guidance set forth by the state.

- 2. How will A/C be handled with the plan to open classroom doors?**

The decision to keep classroom doors open was made to ensure proper ventilation. We have HVAC systems in each school and the district is monitoring these systems to ensure proper air flow.

- 3. How will you reduce the number of students in cafeterias?**

Cafeteria waves will be split into two different areas and students will be spread out at tables to proper social distancing guidelines. There will also be assigned seats at lunch.

- 4. Will there be a change in holding events like teacher appreciation?**

At this point, the district hopes to continue with special and in-person events. However, this will be reviewed on a continuous basis to ensure that it is safe to do so.

- 5. Will there be staggered times for student drop-off and pick-up?**

No. We are not planning for additional staggered start times for our elementary schools or high school. Please note that the pre-COVID-19 staggered arrival and dismissal procedures will be in place.

- 6. Will volunteers be allowed in the schools?**

At this point, volunteers or visitors will be permitted. This will be reviewed throughout the year as further guidance from the CSDE is provided.

- 7. Will water fountains be blocked from use?**

Only bottle-fill type fountains will be active and we are encouraging students to bring their own water bottles from home. At its August meeting, the Suffield Board of Education approved the purchase and installation of additional bottle-fill fountains for all schools.

- 8. Will there be Free Breakfast in Lunch this year?**

Yes, the CSDE has notified the district that all students will have access to free breakfasts and lunches every day. Therefore, we highly encourage our families to access our nutritious meals throughout the school year.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION/RELATED SERVICES**

- 1. Will the district be providing any type of homebound instruction to those who may require it for medical reasons?**

The district has, and will continue to, recognize that there may be unique circumstances that result in the designation of homebound instruction for certain students. There is a specific process required by the CSDE to review such requests and designate Homebound Instruction. Collaboration through the PPT or Section 504 process, as well as, communication with the child's primary care physician or the medical personnel responsible for the child's treatment are all factors in the decision-making.

- 2. If a family decides to homeschool their child(ren), can the students still receive special services?**

If a parent notifies the District of his/her intent to homeschool a child, the child is withdrawn from the district and would not receive special education services.

- 3. How are PPT and 504 meetings being held this year?**

We will be resuming in person meetings this year with protocols in place, however, we will continue to offer a virtual option. Please inform the building special services secretary of your preference when scheduling the meeting.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- 4. What will Remote Learning look like for quarantined students?**

When a teacher is informed that students within his/her classroom are quarantined or COVID-19 positive, they will be informed of the need to turn their classroom cameras on. Students at home will be able to access their lesson plans and watch their classrooms teachers throughout the day without being marked absent. However, students accessing remote learning will not be able to interact with their classroom teachers or classmates unless the majority of students within a classroom are on quarantine. In essence, students will access their classrooms as "view only." The schools will be designating different teachers to reach out to students. Building substitutes, Interventionists, and Academic Support will fulfill these responsibilities.

- 5. Will parent/teacher conferences take place this year?**

At this time, we plan to offer parent-teacher conferences this year. However, teachers and parents can collaboratively decide to do them in-person or remote.

- 6. How will PE be conducted with students having to wear masks?**

If the lesson requires exertion, those lessons will need to be adjusted so students were not exerting themselves while wearing masks. If PE class is held outside and proper social distancing can be achieved, then students may be allowed to remove their masks.

**7. Will distance learning be the end of snow days?**

The state has not approved distance learning be substituted for snow days in 2021-2022.