



Superintendent's Update 8-20-21

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Dear Westport Families,

I truly hope that this summer provided you and your family with much needed rest and relaxation. As the first day approaches on August 31 I want to inform families that there will be multiple updates to keep you apprised of our reopening plans. You can expect regular updates from my office, or from your child's building principal, in the coming days. Additionally, the reopening resource on our newly designed website (more on that next week!!) will be fully updated as the most recent guidance from the CT Department of Public Health (DPH) continues to unfold.

Although the outlook with regards to the pandemic is not as positive as it was in June, we will continue to work towards providing as much normalcy as possible for your child as they return to school. Like last year, we will approach matters in 4-6 week increments, while thoughtfully considering layers of mitigating measures.

We have learned a lot since we opened schools last year. While we have hoped that we would begin the year back to pre-pandemic practices, it is clear that we are not quite there yet. With high vaccination rates in our community, and a prudent approach, we can successfully begin the school year, and in consultation with our medical advisor, and our local and state health departments, we can roll back mitigating measures as the conditions permit.

The following are the most current practices in place for the first day of school:

Universal Masks/Face Coverings:

- Masks will be required for all students and staff while in the school building and on the school bus. This continues to be an executive order, (Executive Order A13, Protection of Public Health and Safety During COVID-19), until 9-30-21 and is consistent with recommendations from both the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).
- Mask breaks will continue to be provided optimally when outside or students are spaced greater than 6 ft.
- No masks will be required outside for recess or other outside activities.
- Fully vaccinated teachers will have the opportunity to remove their masks during active instruction at the front of the classroom per DPH guidance.

Vaccines:

- Governor Lamont issued Executive Order 13D on August 19, 2021. In short, all Pre-K-12 staff are required to have the Covid-19 vaccine. Any employees eligible for medical or religious waivers will be subject to routine testing.

Social Distancing:

- Social distancing of 3 ft. will be implemented to the extent possible in the classrooms and other settings.

Lunch:

- Return to pre-pandemic provision of school lunch services.
- Additional seating will be made available at all levels (i.e. elementary, middle, high) during lunch in order to allow for extra spacing, including outside seating for students during lunch waves.

Visitors:

- Visitors in the buildings will be limited to educational or school business needs. School visits need to be approved by the building administration.
- Given the Governor's mandatory vaccination announcement Thursday, it is possible that visitors will be required to be vaccinated.

After School Activities:

- After school activities will continue but will follow the spacing and masking guidelines.

Building Cleaning:

- Routine and standard cleaning protocols will be in place. Surface transmission has been found to be minimal.

Hand Washing:

- Hand washing will continue to be encouraged throughout the day and the extra sanitizer will be available throughout the buildings.

Quarantine Practices:

- Quarantine practices will continue based on the guideline of being within 6 ft. for 15 minutes over a 24 hour period to a person who is positive for COVID-19.
- Due to limited transmission in classrooms last year, the CDC has made an important exception for students in the classroom setting only. Students in the classroom where everyone is wearing a mask will only be quarantined if they were within 3 ft. of another student positive for COVID-19.
- Vaccinated students and staff will not need to quarantine but will be asked to obtain a test within 3-5 days
- Quarantine length will be continued as it was at the end of the school year and consist of a PCR or antigen test at day 5 or later and return on day 8 if the test is negative and the person is experiencing no symptoms. If no test is obtained the student or staff member will be able to return on day 10 if they are symptom free.
- Students or staff positive for COVID-19 will need to isolate for 10 days from the start of symptoms or the date of the positive test and may return after the 10 days if they are symptom free.

Travel:

- We will continue to recommend CDC guidance for travel both interstate and international.

Ventilation:

- Ventilation includes HVAC systems that optimize the most air to be taken into the building. Merv 10-13 filters are used.

Supports for Students in Quarantine or Isolation:

- Students needing to quarantine or isolate as a result of COVID-19 will receive certain educational supports while in quarantine.
- At the elementary level, these supports will consist of access to essential assignments through Google Classroom, twice weekly scheduled contact with the classroom teacher, and twice weekly contact with support staff to assist in work completion.
- At the secondary level, this will consist of access to posted assignments and communication with teachers via email as needed and, for quarantine periods extending beyond 5 school days, scheduled time with staff to support students during and after quarantine.
- For students who are medically unable to attend school for a verified medical reason, the district will continue to implement its Homebound Instruction Policy 6173. Individuals with questions about this policy or procedure should contact Mr. Rizzo, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Services.
- These supports will be revisited periodically, likely every 4-6 weeks, to determine if additional interventions are warranted based on the number of students requiring these services.

District COVID-19 Dashboard:

- Our on-line COVID-19 dashboard will continue to be updated daily and available on our website.

What Can Families Do?

- Obtain a vaccine for all those eligible 12 years of age and older.
- Continue to complete a daily home screening to monitor students each morning for any signs of illness and anyone with signs of illness should stay home from school and contact your school nurse.
- Please report any COVID-19 cases to our COVID -19 hotline at 203-341-1016 or email PositiveCovidReport@westportps.org
- If a student has had close contact with a person with COVID-19 they should contact their school nurse.

Again, you can anticipate additional updates in the coming days. These are some of the more salient district wide updates. Building principals will send further school-specific messages as we approach the first day of school.

Much, much more to come,
Tom Scarice

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