

August 27, 2021

UPDATE: Please refer to the August 17 letter for details that remain the same at this time.

Dear Preston Learning Community,

WELCOME to our 2021-2022 School Year!

We are looking forward to seeing all of our students on *Monday, August 30, 2021*. We are pleased for the support of the Board of Education and the advocacy of parents to add two new teaching sections one at the Pre-Kindergarten level and one at the Kindergarten level.

This letter contains additional or changed information building off our August 17, 2021 letter that is posted on Facebook and our District Website. As we have experienced the past 17 months, changes are likely to occur based on updated guidance from the CDC, the state, or local health authorities. This letter articulates our current and updated plans.

Opening School to In-person Learning

Our number one priority is the wellbeing of students and staff and maintaining the capacity to stay in-person for our instruction. The District will follow the Governor's Executive Orders (especially EO 13 A through D) which have the rule of law. Primary among those orders are vaccinations, masking, social distancing, and handwashing. As a reminder, the most helpful home based support you can provide is the close monitoring of student health. If you have any health concerns about your students please do not hesitate to contact your school nurse.

We are happy to announce the addition of another nurse to our health team starting at the end of September. This will support our learning community in all of its health related endeavors.

Much of what follows is subject to change as we gather more and more information about the Delta Variant and COVID-19. We intend to open with in-person learning and stay in person as long as appropriate. As noted above, the Department of Public Health and the Connecticut State Department of Education continues to recommend layered mitigation strategies such as masking, social-distancing, testing, ventilation, and vaccinations.

Masking:

High on the list of information our community needs is whether staff and students will be wearing masks as we start in-person learning. **Preston Public Schools will require mask wearing for all staff and students as we begin this school year.**

- Student to student contact in classrooms, as long as both students are masked, at least 3 feet from each other, are not required to quarantine if exposed to a COVID positive student (as long as they remain asymptomatic).
- Students are considered a close contact to a COVID positive person if exposure is greater than 15 minutes in a 24 hour period within three feet and must be quarantined unless vaccinated and asymptomatic. IF well-fitting mask are consistently and correctly worn, by a COVID positive student and those within 3 feet to 6 feet, these exposed students may be excluded from the quarantine requirement as long as they remain asymptomatic.

Remote Learning: As a reminder:

In June 2021 Public Act Nos. 21-46 and 21-2 indicate no remote learning in CT for 2021-22

- While the student is quarantined, the classroom teacher and assigned staff will post/provide digital or paper classwork and will check in with the student on questions and progress.
- Synchronous instruction will not be feasible, as the teacher will have a full classroom of students to instruct and manage.
- Home Schooling, Home Bound Instruction and PPT/Section 504 laws are still in effect.

Other information:

- Generally, outdoors is better than indoors, more space is better than less space, masking is better than not masking in order to keep our students and staff safe.
- Distancing should be 3 feet in classroom, 6 feet wherever possible outside the classroom.
- Lunches can resume in the lunchroom. Spacing 3 feet apart or more when feasible is desirable. Principals are encouraged to consider adding lunch waves in order to maximize spacing if possible and encourage masking in the lunchroom when students are not actively eating. Lunch rotations could also be employed.
- Routine daily cleaning is needed. Disinfection needed in bathrooms, health offices and known exposure areas (vomiting and other fluids) with EPA list N in compliance with CT green cleaning laws.
- Food service does need to collect free and reduced information, however, all lunches are free this year.
- Emergency or approved visits will be permitted with full adherence of COVID restrictions.
- Student pick up and dismissal will remain as we conducted at the end of last year.

We have all adjusted to the fact that *there will likely be changes* based on updated guidance from the CDC, the state, or local health authorities. When more information is available, we will share it with you.

This is my 45th First Day of School after graduating from college (counting all first days it is my First Day number 61!). It is always a pleasure to see staff, families, and especially students, arrive at school excited and ready to learn! It is an honor to work for our entire learning community. Yes, there are many challenges, but there are also many successes, and the future always looks hopeful and bright through the eyes of a happy and engaged learner.

Have a safe, healthy, and successful school year!

Be safe. Be well.

Roy M. Seitsinger, Jr., Ph.D.
Superintendent

