

Hamden Public Schools

The Promise, Pride and Power of Learning



Hamden Safe Return to In Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Reopening Plan

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Dear Hamden Families and Staff:

In July of 2020 and again in July of 2021, we submitted a Reopening Plan to the State of Connecticut which took us through this past school year. You may recall that we began the 2020-2021 school year with a hybrid plan that positioned us well to adapt to remote learning and a five-day, in-school week as health conditions warranted.

We are currently making plans for the opening for the 2022-2023 school year based upon updated guidance we receive from the CT Department of Public Health and the CT State Department of Education. For the 2022-2023 school year, we will return to regularly scheduled school days, five days a week.

What follows this cover letter is Hamden Public Schools' Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan for 2022-2023, which Local Education Agencies are required to update if the school district received ARP-ESSER COVID relief funds. These plans continue to be informed by the Department of Public Health and Department of Education guidance and the input we continue to receive from you. This input includes the various surveys you completed, as well as the comments many of you have made at various public meetings since March 16, 2020.

The Board of Education and Hamden Public Schools leadership will continue to offer opportunities to provide feedback on this current plan at upcoming Board meetings and other formats, once the new school year begins.

We look forward to welcoming back our students, staff, and families to another school year while continuing to work closely to monitor and respond to conditions with our partners from Quinnipiack Valley Health District and the Cornell Scott-Hill Health Center.

Sincerely,

Gary Highsmith
Superintendent
Hamden Public Schools

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Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to provide an update to the framework that has guided our practices and expectations for all students and staff as we prepare for the 2022-2023 school year. We will continue to learn, grow and adapt as needed to adjust to the complexities of new safety and health guidance as it becomes available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), State Department of Education (CSDE), State Department of Public Health (DPH), and the Quinnipiac Valley Health District (QVHD). As such, this document may change as new guidance is provided to schools, and therefore should not be considered an exhaustive list of expectations and protocols.

Part 1: Health and Safety Strategies

Hamden Public Schools chartered a Medical Subcommittee of our School Reopening Committee in July, 2020 composed of medical advisors and district leadership. Since that time, this committee has met 86 times and has allowed for a vigorous discussion and continuous updating of health and safety strategies, protocols, and practices in order to provide the best possible guidance to the district.

The following may be adjusted based on guidance from our medical advisors to respond quickly to rapid increases in cases or clusters of cases in schools (including increases in absenteeism due to respiratory illness).

Vaccination Clinics

In partnership with the Cornell Scott-Hill Health Center and QVHD, vaccination clinics have been and will continue to be held to offer primary and booster doses for staff, students, and families. Hamden Public Schools will also continue to advise families and staff as to the availability of vaccination clinics in our community.

Daily Health Assessment

Families will review the [Daily Health Assessment](#) with their children every day. This Daily Health Assessment is a very important first line of defense in ensuring the health and wellness of our students while also protecting our entire school community from the risk of infection. Families should contact their child's medical provider or their child's school nurse for additional guidance.

"Test, Mask, Go"

"Test, Mask, Go" is a strategy developed by the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), State Department of Education (CSDE), and Office of Early Childhood (OEC) intended to promote access to in-person learning while also protecting against COVID-19 transmission in schools. Students and staff with mild respiratory disease symptoms (e.g., infrequent cough, congestion, runny nose, sore throat, etc.) have the option to continue participating in-person provided:

- they are fever-free (a temperature of less than 100° F) and feel well enough to participate
- they do not live with anyone who has had COVID-19 in the past 2 weeks
- they can wear a mask consistently and correctly, and

- they test negative for COVID-19 prior to reporting in-person on every day they have symptoms, as well as one final test on the morning their symptoms have completely resolved.

Individuals who have any respiratory disease symptoms must not come to school if:

- they have a fever (a temperature of 100° F or higher). They should not report in-person until their fever has resolved for at least 24 hours without the use of medication)
- they live with a person who tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 2 weeks.

These individuals must test for COVID-19 and stay home until their symptoms resolve. Anyone testing positive for COVID-19 should complete isolation according to the guidance provided by their medical provider in consultation with their school nurse.

Hamden Public Schools encourages frequent testing through the distribution of at-home test kits to students and staff and encourage use of the kits by anyone who:

- feels unwell;
- has any symptoms associated with COVID-19;
- has had an exposure to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (**CDC guidelines recommend testing 5 full days after the exposure even if the individual manifests no symptoms**), or;
- has spent a significant amount of time in very close contact with groups of people, such as during holiday gatherings or recent travel.

Mask Protocols

Pursuant to guidance received from the CT DPH, the Hamden Board of Education voted to transition to a mask-optional policy for Hamden Public Schools at its Tuesday, March 8, 2022 Board meeting. The Board's mask-optional policy is still in effect. As such, students, staff and visitors can either wear masks while in Hamden Public School facilities, or can choose not to wear masks while in Hamden Public School facilities.

- Hamden Public Schools supports and respects the decisions of staff, students, families, and visitors who choose to use masks during the school day or at school functions.
- Discrimination or harassment of anyone who chooses to wear or to not wear a mask will not be tolerated.
- Parents must communicate to their child their expectations for mask wearing.
- Parents may supply face masks for their children, and adults can choose to supply their own face masks. **HPS will provide masks for any student or staff member who does not have one and wishes to wear one.**
- Masking protocols may change throughout the school year in response to changes in public health data or guidance from governmental agencies (i.e. The CT Department of Public Health).
- Students must remove masks as requested by school staff for identification purposes at any time.
- Masks must comply with the Student Dress Code. Student masks may not:
 - Advertise or display the symbols of drugs, tobacco products or alcoholic beverages. Be considered racially insensitive or display or imply profane or obscene language or symbols.
 - Include emblems, insignias, badges, tattoos, gang-related or other symbols where the effect thereof is to unreasonably attract the attention of other students or cause disruption or interference with the operation of the school.

- Masking is required for all individuals visiting the health office.
- Under current CDC guidance, all individuals (regardless of vaccination status) who have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 is expected to wear a mask for 10 days. Quarantine may be recommended if COVID-19 transmission levels in a school or the community support doing so to limit the spread of the disease.

Distancing

- Students may engage in group work, table work, or classroom arrangements without minimum distancing, unless directed otherwise by QVHD or any other mandate issued by a regulatory agency.
- Student activities, assemblies, and other gatherings will not have physical distancing requirements unless directed by QVHD or other governmental agency mandates.

Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette

- The Facilities Department has installed signage in buildings to ensure messages related to stopping the spread are accessible for students with disabilities and in languages appropriate for the school population.
- Frequent handwashing and/or hand-sanitizing will be encouraged through signage ([example here](#)) and age-appropriate lessons for students. Students should always be encouraged to wash hands before eating and after recess.
- Classrooms will have access to washing stations and, if necessary, plan for temporary washing stations or hand sanitizer dispensers.
- Sanitizing stations will be placed to facilitate access by anyone entering the building.
- Respiratory etiquette, emphasizing covering the mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing, using and immediately disposing of tissues, and washing hands, will be encouraged with signage and reminders.
- No-Touch Usage
 - The Facilities Department will assist staff in propping doors where appropriate and in accordance with Fire Code such as restrooms and hallways.
 - Trash cans will be located near doors and will not have lids.
 - Restrooms will have trash cans located near the exit where possible; cans will not have lids.

Cleaning Protocols

- Contaminated surfaces are not a significant risk for transmission of SARS-CoV-2. Routine daily cleaning is all that is needed in most areas of school buildings. Prioritize disinfection to bathrooms, health offices/isolation space, and known exposure areas.
- Training Related to Facilities
 - All Facilities staff will be trained and kept up to date on all cleaning and operation protocols.
 - Equipment training for all new equipment will take place to ensure its proper use.
 - Building custodial staff will advise other school staff on best practices.

Ventilation

- The Facilities Department complies with [Guidance for School Systems for the Operation of Central and non- Central Ventilation Systems](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Building systems will be inspected during the summer by the Facilities Department and prior to opening to ensure they are operating properly.
- The Facilities Department will replace air filters prior to the start of the year and upgrade to higher effective filters.
- Filters are changed regularly.
- Where possible, opening windows will be encouraged. Consider, however, how to avoid circumstances where opening a window may pose a health threat, such as asthma or allergy symptoms or creating fall risks for young students.
- The Facilities Department will reprogram building HVAC controls systems to maximize and increase ventilation rates as well as increase the percentage of outdoor air that circulates into the system where possible.
- General building and restroom exhaust fans will be set to run 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.
- The Facilities Department will work with Cenegistics and a certified Test and Balance contractor to audit performance and assist troubleshooting of ventilation systems found not performing adequately.
- **Health Office Ventilation:** if a health office does not have a window, confer with the Facilities Department on ventilation needs.

Contact Tracing, Isolation, and Quarantine

- Hamden Public Schools continues to advise parents to report all cases of COVID-19 to their child's school and recommends that everyone follows [isolation and precautions for people with COVID-19](#).
- The District will continue to report identified cases to QVHD the Connecticut Department of Public Health, and schools will continue to advise families of cases within a classroom, team, grade, or school, as appropriate.
- Hamden Public Schools will continue to work closely with QVHD and our medical advisors to identify the latest guidelines and to review school- and community-based trends in data.
- The district will implement the guidance and timelines for quarantine related to sports activities as outlined by the [CIAC](#).

Health Office Guidelines

- The School COVID-19 Liaison will work with Building Administration on school specific adaptations to the protocols below.
- Nurses will monitor with building custodians the availability of 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, face coverings (as feasible), and no-touch/foot-pedal trash cans.
- Staff must call the health office (or main office if unable to reach the health office) before sending a student. Staff may also use radios if needed but be mindful of privacy.
- If possible, Nurses will go to the classroom to assess a student for minor problems.
- Teachers will be provided with a classroom first aid kit and a Health Office Decision Tree for minor problems where a child may administer self-care.

Infection Control Plan

Identification and Monitoring

- The District will continue to host Health Safety meetings weekly or as necessary to monitor COVID-19 [community data](#) and apply appropriate prevention and response strategies as detailed by the CT DPH, CSDE, and QVHD based on observed or anticipated conditions within our community and our schools.
- Parents, caregivers, or guardians are expected to monitor their children for symptoms of infectious illness every day through home-based symptom screening using the [Daily Health Assessment](#). (see also [Symptoms of COVID-19](#)).
- Instruct students, families, and staff to inform the school nurse 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.
- Health Offices with the assistance of school clerks will 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.
- The District will 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.

Containment procedures for a student or staff member suspected of being ill with COVID-19

- Staff members who suspect they are ill with COVID-19 should contact the school nurse and may be directed to leave the school immediately. HPS staff must report a positive COVID-19 test to the Office of Personnel.
- School staff must notify School Administration about any student they suspect may be ill with COVID-19.
- The District will consult with **its medical advisors** around the signs and symptoms exhibited by students or staff that would require their immediate dismissal from school.
- At the direction of the school nurse, and **in consultation with our medical advisors**, [students in need of isolation](#) may be placed in isolation in the health office. The student must stay in isolation wearing a medical-grade mask while being supervised by staff.
- School nurses will call the parent to determine a timeline for pick up. Parents will be advised of the need for the student to be assessed by a Pediatrician to determine if a COVID-19 test is required.
- Custodians will be directed to clean the Health Office if necessary.
- QVHD will receive notification of a positive COVID-19 test result for a student and will notify the Office of the Superintendent.
- Procedures to guide the District in identifying and addressing staff members and other students who need to quarantine or isolate will be continually reviewed by QVHD and the District Medical Advisor.

Part 2: Continuity of Services

“Connect Before Content”

The focus for the start of the 2022-2023 school year is on reengaging families by providing transition supports and encouraging good school attendance. Support will be provided to meet students academic, and social, emotional and mental health needs. Instructional minutes will include social emotional learning at both the elementary and secondary levels. The Choose Love program will be integrated with the elementary health curriculum. Secondary students will receive regular instruction throughout the year. Tiered intervention blocks will continue to address both reading and math needs based on assessments conducted during the year.

School Visitors

Visitors will be permitted access to HPS schools subject to existing health and safety guidelines in force. This policy is subject to change depending upon school and/or community COVID-19 trend data.

Instructional Adjustments

Curricula

Directors will be providing their departments' adjusted curriculum documents, including information on prioritizing standards, topics, and skills, and accelerating learning. Directors and/or Specialists will meet regularly with teachers to provide guidance on planning for instruction.

Learning plans will ensure that:

- The scope and sequences focus on priority grade-level standards;
- Critical learning gaps are addressed;
- Students are provided with appropriate scaffolds in order to access grade-level learning;
- Formative assessments are administered frequently and consistently in order for groupings, instruction, acceleration and interventions to be most effective.
- Students' social and emotional needs are addressed

Small Group Instruction

It is expected that teachers and staff will work with students in small groups throughout the day and during tiered instruction. There are no requirements for social distancing.

Assessment and Grading

In the school year 2020-2021 the district adopted a Philosophy of Assessment which emphasizes the importance of assessment of, as, and for learning. Formative assessments and feedback are the foundation of our philosophy. An accompanying action plan will help guide the implementation of our philosophy. The District will continue to implement equitable grading practices to meet the needs of all students.

Digital Platforms to Support Teaching and Learning

In accordance with Connecticut's Student Data Privacy Law, all online tools must be privacy compliant. The following apps will continue to be available to staff and/or students during the 2022-23 school year. Some of the purchased tools may be available only to teachers working in specific departments and students in specific courses.

- Zoom
 - All teachers will continue to have Zoom accounts to facilitate district-wide collaboration,

department/staff meetings, formal and informal parent-teacher conferences, and PPT or 504 meetings (when such PPT or 504 meetings are requested).

- Google Classroom
 - Elementary Teachers will maintain homeroom classes in Google Classroom for access to announcements, list assignments and choose to post instructional materials needed for lessons. Google Classroom will be used to provide materials to students in quarantine.
 - Specialists will maintain one Google Classroom per grade level.
 - At the secondary level, teachers will maintain a Google Classroom for each section they teach in order to access announcements, list assignments and post instructional materials needed for lessons. Google Classroom will be used to provide materials to students in quarantine.
 - Co-Teacher Designations
 - Required: Evaluator and Supervisor
 - Suggested: One other teacher who can post sub plans

Google Apps-Docs, Sheets, Forms, Slides, etc.

- ABC-Clio research databases
- Babbling (World Language)
- Desmos (math and science departments)
- Dreambox (K-6 math)
- EdPuzzle
- FlipGrid
- Gale Cengage research databases
- GoGuardian
- IXL (secondary math)
- Lexia (SRBI)
- Lingt (World Language)
- PearDeck
- PebbleGo and PebbleGo Next
- World Book Online

Part 3: Public Comment

As always, frequent and specific communication is essential for effective teaching. Our plan formalizes structures that will ensure that students and families stay connected to their teachers throughout the year, specifically as related to social and emotional needs and the impact of interrupted learning. Our plan also includes pathways for communication and public input on updates to the plan based on changing circumstances, including dedicating time to open forum comments at appropriate Board of Education meetings, conducting surveys, or soliciting input from residents and partnering agencies and entities not involved in the decision-making process.

Since the summer of 2020, regular input has been solicited from stakeholders using a variety of methods. When specific topics surrounding reopening plans were presented at Operations, Facilities, Finance, Personnel or full Board of Education meetings, public comment was encouraged and subsequently posted on our website and/or read aloud during the meetings.

Several district-wide surveys sought input from parents, students, and teachers on their experiences with remote learning and their needs. Parent input was specifically requested on device and connectivity needs in March 2020, the remote learning experience in May 2020, learning model preference for the upcoming school year in July 2020, full distance learning in November 2020, student engagement during the 2020-2021 school year in February 2021, and on the decision to approve a mask optional school environment in February and March, 2022. Student input was sought on remote learning in September 2020 and engagement in March 2021.

Teachers were asked to respond to the remote learning experience in June 2020. During the summer of 2020, teachers also participated in the Teaching and Learning Committee that developed the plans for the hybrid model, remote model for synchronous and asynchronous teaching, and new grading practices. In addition, teachers attended the Accelerated Learning workshops offered by the Connecticut Center for School Change.

All staff were asked to provide feedback in a Spring 2021 survey on the planned closed vaccination clinic for Hamden Public School staff and school community needs for the 2021-2022 school year in June 2021.

Parents, students and teachers were asked for their input on the needs of the school community and interventions for the 2021-2022 school year. The responses revealed common concerns related to the proper functioning of HVAC systems, needed school repairs, student social and emotional wellness, anxiety, and access to adequate technology. Parents and students felt most of their learning loss occurred in math. All stakeholders believed students were most impacted by minimal social interaction, lack of motivation for school work, and lack of concentration and physical activity. The most beneficial supports were identified as in-person learning, credit recovery opportunities, programs and activities to support social interaction, and small group instruction with a teacher and/or tutor.

Health and Safety Liaisons

The District Lead Nurse and each school nurse will serve as a COVID-19 Health and Safety Liaisons responsible for engaging with students, parents, faculty, staff, and administrators to answer questions and share information about COVID-19 health and safety requirements. All school staff and families should know and have the contact information for the designee. The Lead Nurse has the authority to address compliance issues. The Health and Safety Liaisons and Principals will assist in establishing and reinforcing a culture of health, safety, and shared responsibility by:

- Providing training to teachers, staff, students, and parents/guardians prior to school opening, especially concerning frequent hand washing and use of hand sanitizer, respiratory and cough

etiquette, and other topics that impact the general health of our school community.

- Starting each day with a morning message to the entire school reinforcing good health practices.
- Creating and displaying signs around the school as reminders of rules, roles, and responsibilities.
- Health and Safety Liaisons should continue to meet regularly to review best practices, share challenges, discuss staff and student training, and refine messaging to families, staff, and students.

District and School-wide Communications

Multiple efforts will be made to keep the Hamden community informed with the most current information available related to teaching and learning, schedule updates, health and safety information and more:

- **Health and Safety Liaisons in each school:** Liaisons will work with their schools to develop a schedule for communication updates and will 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.
- **Website:** The District will continue to update the district website home page (www.hamden.org) with current information.
- **Availability to All:** When possible, communications will be available in multiple languages. All website-based communications will be enabled to use Google Translate directly, and will meet standards for ADA compliance to be accessible to those with visual and/or hearing impairments.
- **Announcements/Signs:** Schools will continue to help educate students and staff about how COVID-19 is spread and how to help stop the spread.
- **School-based Communications:** Principals will communicate updates to their school communities through multiple electronic means, as needed.
- **District-wide Communications:** Regular district-wide updates will be sent to families via email, phone calls, and social media, as needed.
 - **Surveys:** We will conduct periodic surveys of students, parents, and staff for their feedback of the districts' program and plan implementation.
 - **Public input:** Board of Education Meeting minutes and summaries detailing the continued improvement of this Reopening Plan will be posted regularly on the HPS website and other existing communication mechanisms.

Classroom and School-Based Communications with Families

- PowerSchool is used to log entries of contact by administrators, teachers, and school staff with parents and students to ensure effective communication. All teachers can create log entries for the students on their roster(s). (See [Appendix A: Log Entries in PowerTeacher.](#)) Log entries can also be used to create a record regarding a student's positive achievements, behavior, performance, or activity. Both "note" and "parent contact" are available options.
- All teachers should ensure students and families know how to contact them (email, Google Classroom comments, by phone or other communication platforms, virtual office hours). Students/families may also leave a message at school for the teacher or send a request for a phone call via email. Teachers should respond to messages within 24 hours on school days.
- Teachers who cannot reach a student or family will inform their social worker or guidance counselor to make them aware of the inability to connect. The school team will make all efforts to obtain more accurate contact information and connect with families.

Communication with Families of Multilingual Learners

- To ensure meaningful communication with parents of MLLs, we will continue to disseminate information regarding programs, services and other school-related information in a language they can understand. In addition to phone calls, communication tools include SchoolMessenger, the 'Talking Points' app, and the use of interpreters and translators via Language Line Solutions.
- Google Translate is a free, online application available on most devices. It can also be used without internet connection once downloaded onto your device. Google Translate can be used to translate text, handwriting, speech, and websites in over 100 different languages.
- Follow these directions to download Google Translate:
 - On your computer, install the Google Chrome web browser if you have not already. Google Chrome includes the Google Translate feature.
 - For iPhones and iPads, download the Google Translate app from the app store.

Part 4: Periodic Review Process

This Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan will be reviewed and revised as necessary at least every six months through September 30, 2023. Each review will include seeking public comment on the plan and revisions based on public comment.

A refreshed or updated plan will be submitted to the Connecticut State Department of Education on or before:

- June 23, 2021
- December 23, 2021
- June 23, 2022
- December 23, 2022
- June 23, 2023

Part 5: Understandable and Uniform Format

Federal regulations require that this plan be in an understandable and uniform format, to the extent practicable; is written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable, orally translated; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability, provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent.

This plan has been posted prominently on our district website. Finalsity, our website hosting service, is able to translate our plan into more than 100 different languages making the plan accessible to our community.

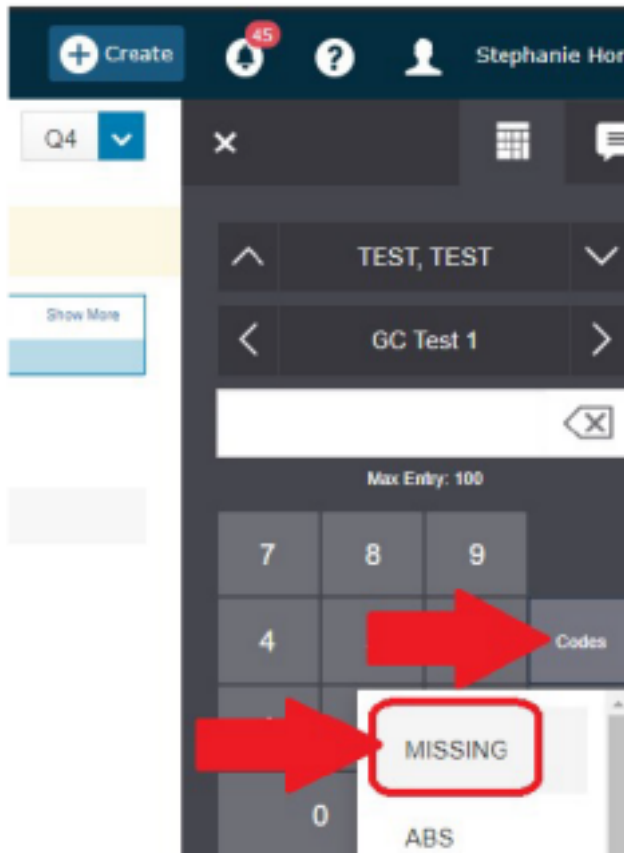
Appendix A: Log Entries in PowerTeacher

Video Tutorial:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFemUxbwhxo&feature=youtu.be>

Appendix B: How to Enter "Missing" Code

- 1) Click on the assignment you want to mark "MISSING"
- 2) Click on the "Codes" button in the score inspector and choose the code "MISSING"



It will enter the code in for that assignment and grade it as a **score of 50**.

STUDENTS (1)	COURSE GRADE	GC TEST 1 (4010926)	GOOGLE CL (4010926)	TEST 4 (4010926)
1. TEST, TEST	C 76% 226/300	MISSING	80	85

- 3) Click the "Save" button to save your grade.