

## McRitchie, Callie

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**From:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 20, 2020 11:36 AM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Subject:** FW: Randi's July New York Times Column  
**Attachments:** AFT ad 2589314.pdf

FYI

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**From:** Catherine Mason, Office of the Secretary-Treasurer <cmason@aft.org> **On Behalf Of** Lorretta Johnson, Secretary-Treasurer  
**Sent:** Monday, July 20, 2020 9:14 AM  
**Subject:** Randi's July New York Times Column

Dear Executive Council members, State Federation Presidents and PPC members:

Randi's July New York Times column, Safety, Not Recklessness, Must Drive School Reopening, is attached for your review. Randi notes that teachers want to get back to their classrooms with their students, as we saw in the June poll of AFT members that found that 76 percent are comfortable returning to school with the public health safeguards detailed in our school reopening plan in place. Since then, the United States has shattered records for new coronavirus cases and the Senate still has not provided the resources necessary to put back-to-school plans and safeguards in place. There are enormous hurdles to returning to school building safely in the coming weeks, not least of which are the Trump administration's incompetent response to and politicizing of the coronavirus pandemic.

Some school districts have been forced to make the difficult decision to start school remotely this year. Others, like New York City which has flattened the curve of infections, plan to reopen this fall with a blended learning model and protocols negotiated with the United Federation of Teachers. Randi calls on officials in the U.S. to follow the lead of countries that have prevailed over the coronavirus—and to act based on science and the common good.

Dr. Lorretta Johnson  
Secretary-Treasurer  
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# Safety, not recklessness, must drive school reopening

**Randi Weingarten**, President  
American Federation of Teachers

Teachers want to get back to their classrooms with their students. We know the limits of remote instruction and the harm of prolonged isolation for students. We know that children best connect, learn and thrive when they're in school in person, and that public schools feed 30 million kids a day, in normal times. In June, 76 percent of AFT members polled said they were comfortable returning to school if public health safeguards like spacing, personal protective equipment, deep cleaning and ventilation were in place. We are not waiting for a vaccine. But, as coronavirus cases surge, we are insisting that officials not reopen school buildings without appropriate conditions and protections in place.

Reopening America's 98,000 public school buildings doesn't happen with an all-caps tweet or an ultimatum from the president. Instead of offering guidance or support to reopen schools safely, the Trump administration's stance is that science and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention should not "stand in the way" of reopening schools. That is reckless and wrong. Science gives us the tools to open schools; the CDC is our blueprint.

Unlike Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, the AFT has been planning for a return to school since school buildings closed in March. In April, we issued our "Plan to Safely Reopen America's Schools and Communities," which is based on science and public health protocols as well as educator and healthcare expertise—not on politics or wishful thinking.

Our plan details three conditions essential for schools to reopen. First, the average daily community infection rate among those tested for the coronavirus must be very low. (New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo has required the rate not to exceed 5 percent for at least 14 days.) Second, schools must employ public health protocols, including 6-foot social distancing, masks, deep cleaning and handwashing stations. Third, adequate resources must be available to enact these safeguards, including funding for additional nurses, guidance counselors and teachers to reduce class size.

But as the United States shatters records for new coronavirus cases, and Congress fails to provide the resources necessary to put back-to-school plans and safeguards in place, there are enormous hurdles to returning to school buildings safely in the next few weeks. That's why school districts like those in Los Angeles, San Diego, Atlanta, Palm Beach County (Fla.) and Houston have been forced to make the difficult decision to start school remotely this year.

## Reopening public school buildings doesn't happen with an all-caps tweet or an ultimatum from the president.

States and localities have been the frontlines of combating this crisis, but their revenues have plunged because of the economic shutdowns, and expenses have increased because of the fight against the coronavirus. They not only need funds to provide essential services, the average school will need an additional \$1.2 million, or \$2,300 per student, to open its doors safely—that's \$116 billion we need from the federal government for schools alone. The public overwhelmingly supports additional funding for states and schools, but Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell took the Senate out on vacation without voting on the HEROES Act, which would provide needed funds.

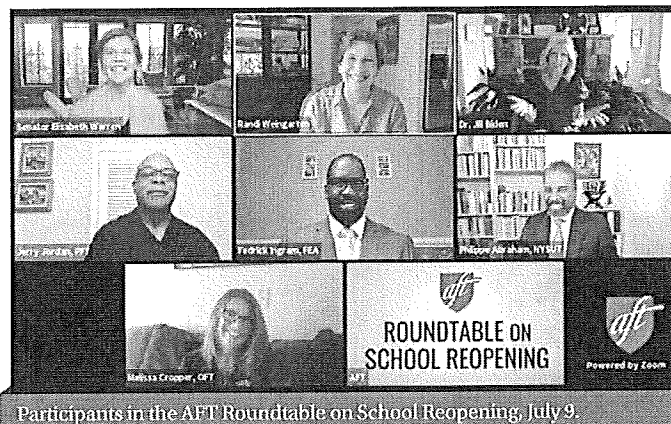
Trump is politicizing opening schools, just as he did with wearing masks. No wonder a majority of American parents see it as risky for schools to reopen in the fall, including majorities across partisan lines. It's also leading

teachers with health risks, or who have family members at risk, to consider leaving the profession. We could face a "brain drain" at the very moment kids need their teachers most.

Many Americans have wondered what would happen if Trump faced a serious crisis, and now we know. Trump had abundant resources at his disposal to fight the pandemic—public health experts, agencies and equipment all ready to be deployed. Instead, he downplayed the threat and called it a hoax. He treated the pandemic as a culture war, refusing to wear a mask, calling it the "Chinese virus," and tweeting that his supporters should "liberate" states instituting shutdowns.

Those shutdowns were meant to buy Trump and the country time to bring the pandemic under control—to get protective equipment where it was needed, ramp up testing and flatten the curve of infections. But Trump wasted precious time with his chaotic, inept response. The sacrifices people have made—isolating; financial hardship; and missing important moments in life, from graduations, to weddings, to being with a loved one in their final moments—were squandered by Trump's incompetence.

Other countries show that it is possible to prevail over the coronavirus—to save lives, preserve livelihoods and return to daily life. Yet in the United States, there are new PPE shortages, there is no national testing system, and Trump says Americans should "live with" the surge in infections. Officials need to act, but their actions must be based upon science and driven by the common good. That is the way to get back to school and back to work.



Participants in the AFT Roundtable on School Reopening, July 9.

**FOLLOW RANDI WEINGARTEN:** [twitter.com/rweingarten](https://twitter.com/rweingarten)

## McRitchie, Callie

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**From:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Sent:** Saturday, July 18, 2020 9:34 AM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Cc:** Jeff Leake; Frances Rabinowitz; Hitchery, Ann Marie  
**Subject:** Re: Monday

I am able to move to noon

Sent from my iPhone

> On Jul 18, 2020, at 9:07 AM, Cardona, Miguel <Miguel.Cardona@ct.gov> wrote:

>

> Are you available to move the 11am meeting with the four of us On

> Monday to 12pm? If so I would like to move it. If not, we will keep

> it. Thanks Might

>

> Sent from my iPhone

## McRitchie, Callie

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**From:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, July 17, 2020 10:50 AM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Subject:** Thu, 7/23 NHV Parent Grp Htfd Schs Reopen Protest

You may have already seen this...

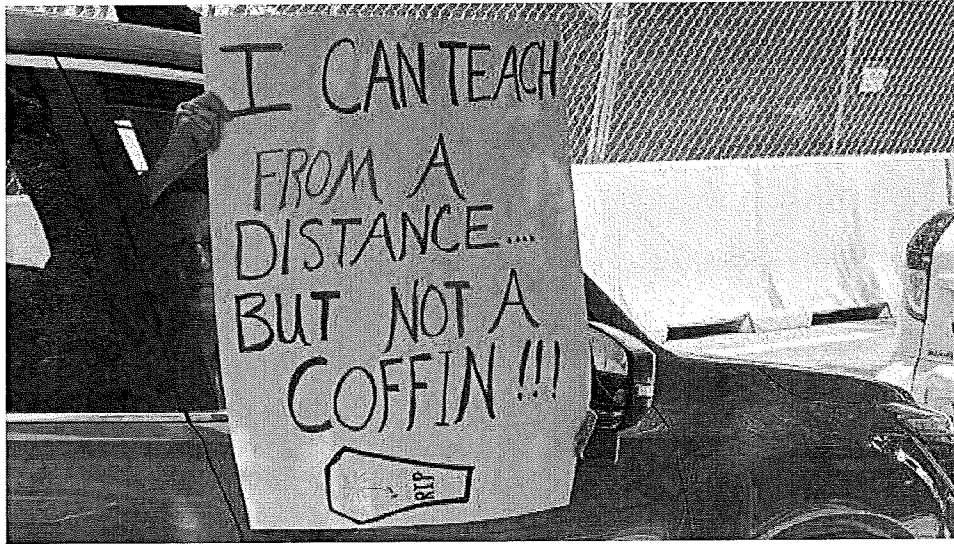
Jan Hochadel  
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**From:** NHPS Advocates <[nhpsadvocates@gmail.com](mailto:nhpsadvocates@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** ~~Join our Car Caravan for a Safe and Fully-Funded Back to School~~  
**Date:** July 14, 2020 at 10:10:51 PM EDT  
**To:** Matt O'Connor <[moconnor@aftct.org](mailto:moconnor@aftct.org)>  
**Reply-To:** "[nhpsadvocates@gmail.com](mailto:nhpsadvocates@gmail.com)" <[nhpsadvocates@gmail.com](mailto:nhpsadvocates@gmail.com)>



[View this email in your browser](#)



{español abajo}

### Join our **Car Caravan for a Safe and Fully-Funded Back to School**

**WHO:** Teachers, school staff, families, students, community, you

**WHAT:** Caravan of cars sending the message to our Governor, Commissioner of Education, state legislators, and other policy makers that we want a SAFE and FULLY-FUNDED back to school. We will have police escort. Decorate your car with signs!

**WHEN:** Thursday July 23, 10AM (schedule to come - sign up here to get details [forms.gle/NGfnVBYpRqWiHDyK9](https://forms.gle/NGfnVBYpRqWiHDyK9))

**WHERE:** State capitol (map of the route to come)

**WHY:** Raise our voices, from a distance in our cars, to say that our lives are at stake: the lives of our children, the lives of our families, the lives of our teachers, and our community as a whole.

~~

In a June 25 press conference, Governor Lamont and state Commissioner of Education, Miguel Cardona unveiled a plan to reopen Connecticut's public schools for full-time, full-capacity, in-person instruction.

While students, their families and educators are eager for a return to the classroom, the state's reopening plan is dangerous and irresponsible. School districts are being asked to hold in-person classes without adequate resources or support. Meanwhile, districts across the state are facing massive budget cuts as a result of tax shortfalls brought on by the Covid19 pandemic. The herculean task of keeping children safe, in addition to the already complex work of providing high-quality instruction, cannot be managed without full-funding and support from the state.

Since the release of the reopening plan, a surge of Covid19 cases has stretched ICU capacities to their limits in places like Florida and Texas, forcing states to scale back their reopening efforts. Similarly, the tri-state region is also experiencing an increase in Covid19 cases and interstate spread is expected as college students return to the region in September. It's evident that we are not out of the woods yet; in fact, the United States has yet to see any meaningful national mitigation plan. Moreover, President Trump and Education Secretary, Betsy DeVos, are insisting on a complete return to in-person instruction across the board. Trump is threatening to withhold funds from districts that don't comply. This is a disastrous scenario, one that demands a terrifying sacrifice from families and educators alike. Connecticut schools need a reopening plan that is determined by safety, not limited by convenience or motivated by the business lobby.

We demand Governor Lamont and Commissioner Cardona:

1. Put the brakes on in-person return: In-person instruction should be phased-in after an initial return to distance learning, beginning Fall 2020.
2. Fund the safest return possible: Adequate additional state funding must fully cover the costs of PPE, physical classroom modification, increased custodial personnel, and smaller class sizes.
3. Ensure professional development and training in distance-learning best practices: Educators must be trained to deliver quality distance learning, which we acknowledge is vastly different from the emergency transition to online learning that occurred this past spring.

We need a safe and funded strategy to reopen our schools. Not only is it our responsibility to protect children, teachers and their families, but also the spread of coronavirus in schools will inevitably lead to community spread beyond schools, and that affects every resident of Connecticut.

**New Haven Public School Advocates**

[nhpsadvocates@gmail.com](mailto:nhpsadvocates@gmail.com) | [nhpsadvocates.org](http://nhpsadvocates.org) | [facebook.com/nhpsadvocates1](https://facebook.com/nhpsadvocates1)

###

Únase a **nuestra caravana de autos para un regreso a la escuela seguro y totalmente financiado**

**QUIÉNES:** maestros, personal escolar, familias, estudiantes, comunidad, usted

**QUÉ:** La caravana de automóviles envía el mensaje a nuestro Gobernador, Comisionado de Educación, legisladores estatales y otros encargados de formular políticas de que queremos un regreso SEGURO y COMPLETAMENTE FINANCIADO a la escuela. Tendremos escolta policial. ¡Decora tu coche con carteles!

**CUANDO:** jueves 23 de julio, 10AM (horario por venir - Regístrese aquí para obtener detalles: [forms.gle/NGfnVBYPqWiHDyK9](https://forms.gle/NGfnVBYPqWiHDyK9))

**DONDE:** Capitolio estatal (mapa de la ruta por venir)

**POR QUÉ:** Elevar nuestras voces, desde la distancia en nuestros autos, para decir que nuestras vidas están en juego: la vida de nuestros hijos, la vida de nuestras familias, la vida de nuestros maestros y nuestra comunidad en general.

~~

En una conferencia de prensa el 25 de junio, el Gobernador Lamont y el Comisionado de Educación del estado, Miguel Cardona dio a conocer un plan para reabrir las escuelas públicas de Connecticut para recibir instrucción a tiempo completo, a plena capacidad y en persona. Si bien los estudiantes, sus familias y educadores están ansiosos por regresar al aula, el plan de reapertura del estado es peligroso e irresponsable. Se les pide a los distritos escolares que impartan clases en persona sin recursos o apoyo adecuados. Mientras tanto, los distritos de todo el estado se enfrentan a recortes presupuestarios masivos como resultado de la escasez de impuestos provocada por la pandemia de Covid19. La tarea hercúlea de mantener a los niños seguros, además del trabajo ya complejo de proporcionar instrucción de alta calidad, no se puede manejar sin la financiación y el apoyo completos del estado.

Desde el lanzamiento del plan de reapertura, una oleada de casos de Covid19 ha reducido las capacidades de la UCI a sus límites en lugares como Florida y Texas, obligando a los estados a reducir sus esfuerzos de reapertura. Del mismo modo, la región tri-estatal también está experimentando un aumento en los casos de Covid19 y se espera una propagación interestatal a medida que los estudiantes universitarios regresen a la región en septiembre. Es evidente que todavía no estamos fuera de peligro; de hecho, Estados Unidos aún

no ha visto ningún plan de mitigación nacional significativo. Además, el presidente Trump y la secretaria de Educación, Betsy DeVos, insisten en un retorno completo a la instrucción en persona en todos los ámbitos. Trump está amenazando con retener fondos de distritos que no cumplen. Este es un escenario desastroso, que exige un sacrificio aterrador tanto de las familias como de los educadores. Las escuelas de Connecticut necesitan un plan de reapertura que esté determinado por la seguridad, no limitado por la conveniencia o motivado por el lobby empresarial.

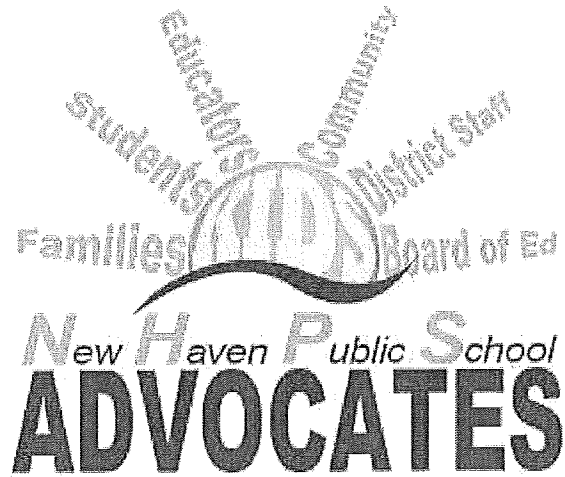
Exigimos al gobernador Lamont y al comisionado Cordona:

1. Presione los frenos en el regreso en persona: la instrucción en persona debe ser gradual después de un retorno inicial al aprendizaje a distancia, a partir del otoño de 2020.
2. Financiar el retorno más seguro posible: la financiación estatal adicional adecuada debe cubrir por completo los costos de PPE, modificación física del aula, aumento del personal de custodia y clases más pequeñas.
3. Asegurar el desarrollo profesional y la capacitación en mejores prácticas de aprendizaje a distancia: los educadores deben estar capacitados para brindar un aprendizaje a distancia de calidad, lo cual reconocemos que es muy diferente de la transición de emergencia al aprendizaje en línea que ocurrió la primavera pasada.

Necesitamos una estrategia segura y financiada para reabrir nuestras escuelas. No solo es nuestra responsabilidad proteger a los niños, los maestros y sus familias, sino que también la propagación del coronavirus en las escuelas inevitablemente conducirá a la propagación de la comunidad más allá de las escuelas, y eso afecta a todos los residentes de Connecticut.

### **Defensores de las escuelas públicas de New Haven**

[nhpsadvocates@gmail.com](mailto:nhpsadvocates@gmail.com) | [nhpsadvocates.org](http://nhpsadvocates.org) | [facebook.com/nhpsadvocates1](https://facebook.com/nhpsadvocates1)



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[youtube.com/AFTConn](https://youtube.com/AFTConn)  
[aftct.podbean.com](http://aftct.podbean.com)

"A Union of Professionals"

## McRitchie, Callie

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**From:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, July 10, 2020 3:26 PM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel; 'Frances Rabinowitz'; jeffl@cea.org  
**Cc:** Hitchery, Ann Marie  
**Subject:** Re: Talks

Sounds great. 11 or 1:30 work for me.

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www.aftct.org | www.facebook.com/AFTConnecticut | @AFTCT

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**From:** Cardona, Miguel <Miguel.Cardona@ct.gov>  
**Sent:** Friday, July 10, 2020 3:23 PM  
**To:** 'Frances Rabinowitz' <frabinowitz@capss.org>; Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>; jeffl@cea.org <jeffl@cea.org>  
**Cc:** Hitchery, Ann Marie <AM.Hitchery@ct.gov>  
**Subject:** Talks

Hello

Is there interest in talks on a few topics that have come up?

1. National Statements from AFT/CEA
2. Remote learning options for opt-outs
3. Facial coverings for 3-4 year olds
4. Air quality

I would prioritize this if you are available Monday for any one-hour blocks at 11am, 1:30pm, or 2:30pm. We will go with majority availability. I would prefer to meet with the three of you.  
Let me know, thanks!

Miguel

**Miguel A. Cardona, Ed. D.**  
Commissioner of Education  
State of Connecticut

## McRitchie, Callie

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**From:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Sent:** Friday, July 10, 2020 2:47 PM  
**To:** Jan Hochadel  
**Cc:** Jeff Leake  
**Subject:** Re: CVAN Alert: American Academy of Pediatrics Press Release on Reopening

This is good.

Miguel

**Miguel A. Cardona, Ed. D.**  
Commissioner of Education  
State of Connecticut

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**From:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, July 10, 2020 11:46 AM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Cc:** Jeff Leake  
**Subject:** Fwd: CVAN Alert: American Academy of Pediatrics Press Release on Reopening

FYI

Sent on Behalf of Viri Pettersen, Northeast Regional Director:

<https://www.aft.org/press-release/pediatricians-educators-and-superintendents-urge-safe-return-school-fall>

**Washington, DC**—The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Education Association (NEA) and AASA, The School Superintendents Association, join together today in the following statement on the safe return of students, teachers, and staff to schools:

“Educators and pediatricians share the goal of children returning safely to school this fall. Our organizations are committed to doing everything we can so that all students have the opportunity to safely resume in-person learning.

“We recognize that children learn best when physically present in the classroom. But children get much more than academics at school. They also learn social and emotional skills at school, get healthy meals and exercise, mental health support and other services that cannot be easily replicated online. Schools also play a critical role in addressing racial and social inequity. Our



nation's response to COVID-19 has laid bare inequities and consequences for children that must be addressed. This pandemic is especially hard on families who rely on school lunches, have children with disabilities, or lack access to Internet or health care.

"Returning to school is important for the healthy development and well-being of children, but we must pursue re-opening in a way that is safe for all students, teachers and staff. Science should drive decision-making on safely reopening schools. Public health agencies must make recommendations based on evidence, not politics. We should leave it to health experts to tell us when the time is best to open up school buildings, and listen to educators and administrators to shape how we do it.

"Local school leaders, public health experts, educators and parents must be at the center of decisions about how and when to reopen schools, taking into account the spread of COVID-19 in their communities and the capacities of school districts to adapt safety protocols to make in-person learning safe and feasible. For instance, schools in areas with high levels of COVID-19 community spread should not be compelled to reopen against the judgment of local experts. A one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate for return to school decisions.

"Reopening schools in a way that maximizes safety, learning, and the well-being of children, teachers, and staff will clearly require substantial new investments in our schools and campuses. We call on Congress and the administration to provide the federal resources needed to ensure that inadequate funding does not stand in the way of safely educating and caring for children in our schools. Withholding funding from schools that do not open in person fulltime would be a misguided approach, putting already financially strapped schools in an impossible position that would threaten the health of students and teachers.

"The pandemic has reminded so many what we have long understood: that educators are invaluable in children's lives and that attending school in person offers children a wide array of health and educational benefits. For our country to truly value children, elected leaders must come together to appropriately support schools in safely returning students to the classroom and reopening schools."

Viri Pettersen

AFT - Director, Northeast Region

516-662-8618

| E: [vpettersen@aft.org](mailto:vpettersen@aft.org) | Twitter: @mspetter

#FundOurFuture

#HEROESAct

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## McRitchie, Callie

---

**From:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 9, 2020 9:00 AM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Subject:** Re: message

Sounds great. Thank you

Jan Hochadel  
AFT Connecticut, AFL-CIO  
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**From:** Cardona, Miguel <Miguel.Cardona@ct.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 9, 2020 8:37 AM  
**To:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Subject:** message

Hello,  
I will be including this in my opening remarks... Wanted to share it with you first. Shows unity.  
Let me know if you have any questions or thoughts.  
Thanks

Miguel

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

"We all want children back for so many reasons, but we also want to ensure that educators and districts feel safe and supported. We have and will continue to work with our teacher leaders to hear concerns and problem solve together. In recent productive meetings with Jan Hochadel and Jeff Leake, presidents from AFT and CEA, we agree that we will get farther together. That is best for students and staff. I want to also thank CAPSS, CABE, and CAS for their time and commitment to work together to be solution oriented. There is no playbook that anyone of us can reference to respond to pandemic, but working together, we will get the best results."

## McRitchie, Callie

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**From:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 8, 2020 2:12 PM  
**To:** Jan Hochadel  
**Subject:** Re: Draft message to teachers

This is great Jan, thank you.

Miguel

**Miguel A. Cardona, Ed. D.**  
Commissioner of Education  
State of Connecticut

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**From:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 8, 2020 2:08 PM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Subject:** Draft message to teachers

I welcome your thoughts before I send to my members.  
Jan

---

Sisters and Brothers,

I want to thank everyone for their input on the State of CT's School Reopening Plan. Your advocacy for the safety of yourselves, the students, and your colleagues was certainly noted by the Department of Education and the Governor's Office. Our voices are always stronger when we speak together.

The challenges for safely reopening schools are formidable. The real work is still ahead. We must move forward, and to do that in a productive way we must collaboratively work with the Commissioner and his team to prepare for the '20-'21 school year. We must together find solutions to the real problems that lie before us. The Commissioner has made it clear that he views the teachers' unions as partners in this process. AFT CT is committed to working with his office and CEA so our members and students have a safe, rewarding opening to the school year.

No plan will be perfect. We are trying to do something unprecedented in our history - educate students during a pandemic. No one benefits if we step aside and then complain. We will be reaching out to our members to hear your opinions and ideas. We welcome the Commissioner's willingness to work with us. The Governor, the Commissioner, and all educators have the same goal. We can best reach that goal by working together.

In Solidarity,

Jan Hochadel

AFT Connecticut, AFL-CIO

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## McRitchie, Callie

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**From:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 8, 2020 10:42 AM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel; Soto, Chris  
**Cc:** Don Williams (donw@cea.org); Stuart Savelkoul  
**Subject:** Hamden Plan

I wanted to make you aware that Hamden just published their "tentative" plan for reopening on FB.

Please note the following back to school plan is a draft.

Elementary students would go to school 4 days per week for 5 ½ hours per day. ½ of the day will be spent with a teacher in the class with instruction and the other ½ will be spent in the school doing distance learning with adult support.

This will allow for reduced class sizes. The day will be shorter to allow for teacher planning time at the end of the day. One day per week will be a planning day for teachers. Teachers need additional planning time because they will be planning for in classroom instruction and distance learning for students who will be staying home. The day off will also allow for weekly deep cleaning.

All 6th graders will go to Wintergreen to make space at all the elementary schools.

Middle School and High School will go to school 2 days per week for instruction. This allows for reduced classroom sizes. One full day for cleaning and teacher planning. They are trying to figure out how to keep High School kids in cohorts.

This plan allows for a seamless transition to distance learning if necessary or full brick and mortar if all goes well.

The wellness committee will evaluate students for social-emotional wellbeing and learning loss from distance learning last spring.

Students will be fed in the classrooms. They will either have meals delivered to the classroom or students will pick up their food from the kitchen and return to the classroom.

BOE is still working with First Student on bus schedules and routes.

Surveys will go to staff to see who is coming back. Some staff members may have immune issues. Those staff members will work on the distance learning piece.

A survey will go out to parents to see who is planning to send their children back to school. Distance learning will be available to any students who choose to stay home.

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## McRitchie, Callie

---

**From:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 8, 2020 10:39 AM  
**To:** Don Williams (donw@cea.org); Dan Livingston; Cardona, Miguel; Mounds, Paul  
**Subject:** FAQ Legal Questions about return to work  
**Attachments:** Legal Questions from teachers reopen.pdf

Good morning -

In conversations with you all, we have discussed the need to have accurate information we can share with our members about issues and concerns in returning to our school committees. Attached is a list of questions we discussed at our PreK-12 Council Meeting. Are folks interested in working on a document that can be agreed to by all parties and shared?

Please let me know your thoughts.

Jan

Jan Hochadel  
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### **Legal Questions from PreK-12 Council:**

- 1) Live-Streaming a class. It is legal to have the teacher streamed but this can be a negotiation point.
  - a) Students cannot be live streamed in the classroom without a waiver from the parents, however a teacher can be livestreamed into the virtual classroom for students who may not be present in the classroom. Recent guidance from the State indicates support for making virtual interactions part of the new normal.
  - b) Review cba language regarding video surveillance and use for evaluation.
- 2) Can a person refuse to report to work in general?
  - a) A teacher cannot refuse to report to work. If an employee has a health condition or disability that would require an accommodation, they can engage in the interactive process with their employer to find an accommodation. See #4 for more details.
- 3) Do they have more rights to refuse to report to a non-ventilated classroom? a poorly ventilated one? Are there definitions or standards of what is poor ventilation? What process should be followed when there are serious concerns about a room assignment, or a large class crammed into a small classroom?
  - a) The CDC offers the following guidance regarding ventilation in schools: "Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms) to children using the facility."
  - b) CDC guidance does not outline remedies to poor ventilation. If there are concerns about the room, the issue should be brought to the attention of administration.
  - c) Most likely an employee would not be able to refuse to work in a nonventilated classroom if other safety measures like facemasks are being used.
  - d) Reports and/or complaints of unsafe work environments should be brought to Administration and potentially to Conn OSHA.  
<https://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/osha/osha.htm>
- 4) Teachers can ask for ADA accommodations leading to no-mask assignments, plexiglass barriers, and remote assignments. Are districts required to have provisions for vulnerable people? If they don't have them on the first day of school, rather they are "working on it", what is an appropriate response? James) ADA accommodations - Covid related illness is not a disability but if you have heightened health issues that can be reason to request an accommodation. Now is a time to start discussing need for accommodations with the district. Give the most lead time possible.
- 5) From kathleenkoljian : How will things be 'prioritized' within ADA requests? Given the age of many teachers and the ever-expanding list



of potential comorbidities/risk factors, is this something we should be negotiating for? ADA is outside the bargaining power of local, not part of CBA.

- a) Employers must still engage in the interactive process to find a reasonable accommodation; however, they need not accommodate every request if it would cause an undue hardship on the employer. An undue hardship means significant difficulty or expense. Even with an accommodation, the employee must still be able to do the essential job functions of their position.
  - b) An employer can ask for medical documentation to determine whether the employee has a disability under the ADA and to learn what accommodations are required. Employers may offer temporary accommodations that expire after a certain date.
  - c) The ADA does not require that an employer accommodate an employee without a disability based on the disability-related needs of a family member or other person with whom she is associated. (Employee has mother or child with auto immune disorder at home; employer does not have to accommodate employee)
  - d) While an employer can start the interactive process for an accommodation, the employer does not have to seek out vulnerable employees and offer them accommodations. Employees who are seeking an accommodation based on an eligible disability should, in writing, request an ADA accommodation and outline the underlying condition and the recommended accommodations.
  - e) Employees should start the interactive process as soon as possible. Waiting until the school year starts could result in the employer not being able to accommodate the teacher.
  - f) From kathleen koljian to Everyone: (6:45 PM) Can we negotiate for more stringent protections for members with risks as well? Thanks! (james) we need to make sure age is not the issue but underlying medical is the issue
  - g) See the following link for a more in depth breakdown:  
<https://www.eeoc.gov/wysk/what-you-should-know-about-covid-19-and-ada-rehabilitation-act-and-other-eeo-laws>
- 6) Can the administrator assign a teacher on a free period or a paraeducator to that isolation room? Eric - No, it should be a health professional. Your contract is in full force, your free period and lunch is in place. If the admin is telling you that you need to monitor the isolation room, it is a violation of the bargaining agreement. James- District should have a safety committee that this question can be asked.
- a) This would likely be either a violation of the CBA, a unilateral change in working conditions, or both.
- 7) How do we insist on medical quality PPE? Can we refuse the assignment if they give us a hefty bag for a gown, and a ratty cloth mask as PPE? Can not refuse a position but you need to advocate for PPE, make admin aware, put public pressure to show school may be using substandard ppe..

- a) If unsafe work conditions exist employees may report issues to OSHA or the local public health authority. Staff cannot refuse an assignment if they do not feel that they have proper PPE. That said, employees should make written complaints to both school administrators and local health officials and/or OSHA if guidelines are not being followed.
  - b) Public pressure can also be used. Parents are not going to be happy about the use of substandard PPE.
  - c) Eric - Mask breaks - much of the plan is advisory - (TK) Can special education teachers with high needs students on their caseload be forced to wear full PPE equipment like face shields and full gowns like an ICU nurse. (Eric) if the teacher feels unsafe to remove, then do not remove. If a particular student is resistant to seeing teacher wearing PPE then make the admin and parents aware, because you should not put the staff at risk just because a student does not want to wear a mask.
- 8) Can a reasonable accommodation in one building in the district be an unreasonable accommodation in another?
- a) James - Yes. As with any ADA request the test requires the employer to weigh the requested accommodation and the burden of furnishing that accommodation. The undue burden standard is a subjective test. Each district may have different circumstances which would lead to different possible accommodations. What one building, district can do may be different from another.
- 9) What is the overriding consideration in the age of Covid-19 when a conflict exists between IEP requirements and Covid-19 protocols? How do we anticipate all the ways these two considerations will conflict?
- a) (James) We cannot anticipate all the ways the two may conflict. Generally, the requirements of the IEP should be continued to be followed. If exclusion is a temporary emergency measure it can continue for up to 10 consecutive school days prior to needing to amend the IEP. After 10 days of consecutive absences from school, i.e. 10 days of virtual learning, the parents and staff should meet to consider long term exclusion and other placement decisions. the child's needs could be met through homebound instruction, then under 34 CFR §300.503(a)(1), the public agency must issue a prior written notice proposing the change in placement.
  - b) The following link provides a helpful breakdown of potential scenarios surrounding IEPs and Covid 19. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/qa-covid-19-03-12-2020.pdf>
  - c) Dual concern - making staff and student safe - If we know we have a student with sensory issues how are we going to be preemptive to address concerns/needs.
- 10) Children with IEPs that allow standing and wandering in the classroom, or hallways breaks, or not sitting down for long stretches.

- a) Yes, if possible all accommodations from the IEP should continue to be followed. If the student cannot maintain the accommodations detailed in the IEP then a meeting should be set up to update the IEP within the confines of the reality facing the school.
- 11) Is it legal to isolate a sick child in school? Is that a restraint that needs to be reported? A highly restrictive environment? Are there considerations that would apply to isolating a sick student with an IEP but not other general ed students?
  - a) (Eric) The CDC recommends that if a student or staff member gets sick, to immediately separate staff and children with COVID-19 symptoms (such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath) at school. Individuals who are sick should go home or to a healthcare facility depending on how severe their symptoms are. It also recommends establishing an isolation room and develop an isolation procedure. The school nurses should develop an isolation plan. It would be legal to isolate a sick child in school until they can be sent home or to a healthcare facility for treatment.
    - i) From Marianne Maloney to Everyone: (7:03 PM) Isolating a student during the school day is supposed to trigger contact tracing and quarantine ... How quickly does that kick in? (Eric) - there should be plans from districts to implement quickly
  - b)
- 12) Isolation will become a fairly common experience with fall allergies presenting the same as Covid19, so we need to be ready for that. (Eric) Potentially may have more students in this isolation type room because of similar symptoms
- 13) Can a Superintendent just ignore the Governor's recommendation and not bring back all the students? (Eric) - It is possible but not likely - (James) referring to the document Low, Medium, High risk - each district will have discretion to access as the virus goes up and down
  - a) The guidance by the CDC and the governor reflect the minimum safety standard required for schools. If a Board of Education or Superintendent does not believe that the school can meet minimum safety requirements, they can switch back to a virtual learning environment either entirely or partially.
  - b) From Marianne Maloney to Everyone: (7:03 PM) Isolating a student during the school day is supposed to trigger contact tracing and quarantine ... How quickly does that kick in? (Eric) - there should be plans from districts to implement quickly
- 14) CARES Act provisions, Family First or FMLA+, for paid time off for ordered quarantine, and not charging to accrued sick days. Knowledge of these may provide a sense of a safety net. Is there an info sheet, or talking points available? (Eric)
  - a) <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic>
  - b) Fact Sheet: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employee-paid-leave>

c)

- d) Two weeks (up to 80 hours) of paid sick leave at the employee's regular rate of pay where the employee is unable to work because the employee is quarantined (pursuant to Federal, State, or local government order or advice of a healthcare provider), and/or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis; or
- e) Two weeks (up to 80 hours) of paid sick leave at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay because the employee is unable to work because of a bona fide need to care for an individual subject to quarantine (pursuant to Federal, State, or local government order or advice of a healthcare provider), or to care for a child (under 18 years of age) whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19, and/or the employee is experiencing a substantially similar condition as specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of the Treasury and Labor; and
- f) Up to an additional 10 weeks of paid expanded family and medical leave at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay where an employee, who has been employed for at least 30 calendar days, is unable to work due to a bona fide need for leave to care for a child whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19.
- g) See <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employee-paid-leave-for-more-details>.

15) Can the employer ask questions about health to screen for symptomatic employees? Can they designate anyone to screen, even someone who is not actually trained, like for example a secretary or a random teacher who has a free period? Are there rules about storing and access to these screening questionnaires? (Eric) - This would be an issue. Not something we have been trained to do - In Norwalk paras are being asked to take temps. Not what they are trained to do and should be done by a medical professional. HIPPA still applies in this day and age - Can be required to be tested. Can NOT share that information but if you test positive can have you stay home until passes

- a) Yes, ADA covered employers may ask employees if they are experiencing pandemic like symptoms. They may also mandate testing as a condition of continued employment. HIPPA privacy rights still apply.
- b) Current guidelines do not specify who may or may not administer Covid-19 tests. The ADA requires that any mandatory medical test be "job related and consistent with business necessity." Applying this standard to the current circumstances of the

COVID-19 pandemic, employers may choose to administer COVID-19 testing to employees before they enter the workplace to determine if they have the virus. In giving these tests the employer should follow guidance from the Food and Drug Administration. guidance

- c) The ADA requires that all medical information about an employee be stored separately from the employee's personal file. The employer needs to maintain the confidentiality of daily temperature logs, however they may disclose the name of an employee who has tested positive for Covid 19 to a public health agency.

## McRitchie, Callie

---

**From:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 6, 2020 12:37 PM  
**To:** Leake, Jeff [CT]  
**Cc:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Subject:** Re: Talks

Is there a chance we could meet before or after our meeting on Wednesday?

On Jul 6, 2020, at 12:25 PM, Leake, Jeff [CT] <jeffl@cea.org> wrote:

Well, I can't even say good morning at this time – so Good Afternoon to both of you. Just finished 4 hours of phone calls and zoom meetings – I'm sure you know what that's like.

Would certainly be happy to have the conversation suggested below – today's pretty much shot – tomorrow has flexibility as does Wednesday afternoon.

If any of these work, I will be there.

Thanks for the reach out,

Jeff

---

**From:** "Cardona, Miguel" <Miguel.Cardona@ct.gov>  
**Date:** Monday, July 6, 2020 at 9:30 AM  
**To:** "Leake, Jeff [CT]" <jeffl@cea.org>, "jhochadel@aftct.org" <jhochadel@aftct.org>  
**Subject:** Talks

Hello,

I hope you are both well when you receive this. I am very interested in continuing regular dialogue on how to best proceed in CT and address the concerns expressed.

Given how the conversation went last week, and feedback that there were too many on the call, I wonder how you feel about regular conversations with the three of us to get down to the issues that need immediate attention.

Let me know your thoughts.

Thanks!

Miguel

Miguel A. Cardona, Ed. D.

Commissioner of Education  
State of Connecticut

**McRitchie, Callie**

---

**From:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 6, 2020 9:35 AM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel; jeffl@cea.org  
**Subject:** RE: Talks

Good Morning,  
I think that would be great and look forward to starting our talks.  
Jan

---

**From:** Cardona, Miguel <Miguel.Cardona@ct.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 06, 2020 9:30 AM  
**To:** jeffl@cea.org; Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Subject:** Talks

Hello,

I hope you are both well when you receive this. I am very interested in continuing regular dialogue on how to best proceed in CT and address the concerns expressed.  
Given how the conversation went last week, and feedback that there were too many on the call, I wonder how you feel about regular conversations with the three of us to get down to the issues that need immediate attention.

Let me know your thoughts.

Thanks!

Miguel

**Miguel A. Cardona, Ed. D.**  
Commissioner of Education  
State of Connecticut



## McRitchie, Callie

---

**From:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Sent:** Monday, June 29, 2020 7:34 PM  
**To:** Jan Hochadel  
**Subject:** Re: Add'l Schl Bldgs Re-Open Press Stmnt

Thanks for heads up Jan. We will need to work together. Mary did really well on Capitol Report.

Miguel

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

On Jun 29, 2020, at 7:04 PM, Jan Hochadel <[JHochadel@aftct.org](mailto:JHochadel@aftct.org)> wrote:

I don't you to be blindsided... my educators are very upset.

Jan Hochadel  
AFT Connecticut, AFL-CIO  
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T: 860-257-9782 | F: 860-257-8214 | E: [jhochadel@aftct.org](mailto:jhochadel@aftct.org)  
[www.aftct.org](http://www.aftct.org) | [www.facebook.com/AFTConnecticut](https://www.facebook.com/AFTConnecticut) | @AFTCT

<Gov Schl Bldg Reopen Plan Comments.docx>

## McRitchie, Callie

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**From:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 29, 2020 6:50 PM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Subject:** Fw: Add'l Schl Bldgs Re-Open Press Stmnt  
**Attachments:** Gov Schl Bldg Reopen Plan Comments.docx

I don't you to be blindsided... my educators are very upset.

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## **6/29 - Full schl bldg reopen plan release (for joint PR)**

**(attributed to AFT CT & CEA leaders TBD)**

“We intend to fully analyze the 50-page document released late this afternoon; at first glance it appears incomplete at best. We have yet to find any reference to empowering local or regional districts with the resources clearly needed to implement the sort of in-person learning plan outlined.

“Instead it appears to pass the proverbial ‘buck’ for reopening buildings to local school superintendents and board members who already face difficult budgetary choices. It’s beyond outrageous for state officials to pursue such an approach on the same day they released survey results finding deep disparities for Connecticut’s highest-need districts during distance learning.

“The lack of equity in this guideline is simply astounding. The reality is that some districts have adequate resources for the kind of plan outlined here; those in high-need communities do not. Parents in many of these communities lack access to paid leave and this plan would force them to make an impossible choice. They should not have to consider sending sick children to school during a global pandemic that health experts have said will still be with us in the fall.

“Further, nowhere in the guidelines do we see a plan for recruiting and deploying social workers or school counselors to deal with family, health and trauma issues experienced during the pandemic.

“While the guidelines call for following CDC (Centers for Disease Control) protocols in some areas, they fall far short in many others. The plan suggests social distancing between student workstations and that district officials should try to achieve ‘six feet when feasible.’

“Teachers and school support staff know that, without ensuring the resources to allow smaller class sizes, that is imply not feasible in almost any Connecticut classroom. The plan also includes no additional funding to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) for students and staff, which alone could cost tens of thousands of dollars for each district.

“Finally, the outline requires a great deal of further planning for districts over the next three weeks. Not addressed is how will they be able to effectively collaborate with teachers and other community partners.

“Clearly what Connecticut’s students, their families and educators need is a lifeline, not an anchor — unfortunately that is all this so-called ‘plan’ appears to be.”

## McRitchie, Callie

---

**From:** Williams, Don [CT] <donw@cea.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 29, 2020 3:42 PM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Subject:** Re: Final Draft

Thank you, Miguel!

Sent from my iPhone

> On Jun 29, 2020, at 2:39 PM, Cardona, Miguel <Miguel.Cardona@ct.gov> wrote:

>

>

## McRitchie, Callie

---

**From:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 29, 2020 2:39 PM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Subject:** RE: Final Draft

Thank you

---

**From:** Cardona, Miguel <Miguel.Cardona@ct.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 29, 2020 2:38 PM  
**To:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Subject:** Fw: Final Draft

Here it is. Advisory team will get separate email.

Miguel

**Miguel A. Cardona, Ed. D.**  
Commissioner of Education  
State of Connecticut

---

**From:** Soto, Chris  
**Sent:** Monday, June 29, 2020 2:33 PM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel; Stefon, Laura; Yazbak, Peter  
**Subject:** Final Draft

**Chris Soto**  
Director of Innovation & Partnerships  
CT State Department of Education

---

**From:** Wadowski, Andrea <Andrea.Wadowski@ct.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 29, 2020 2:33 PM  
**To:** Soto, Chris <Chris.Soto@ct.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: New draft

Here it is

## **McRitchie, Callie**

---

**From:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Sent:** Monday, June 29, 2020 2:39 PM  
**To:** Williams, Don [CT]; jeffl@cea.org  
**Subject:** Fw: Final Draft  
**Attachments:** CTReopeningSchools.pdf

Here it is. Advisory team will get separate email

Miguel

**Miguel A. Cardona, Ed. D.**  
Commissioner of Education  
State of Connecticut

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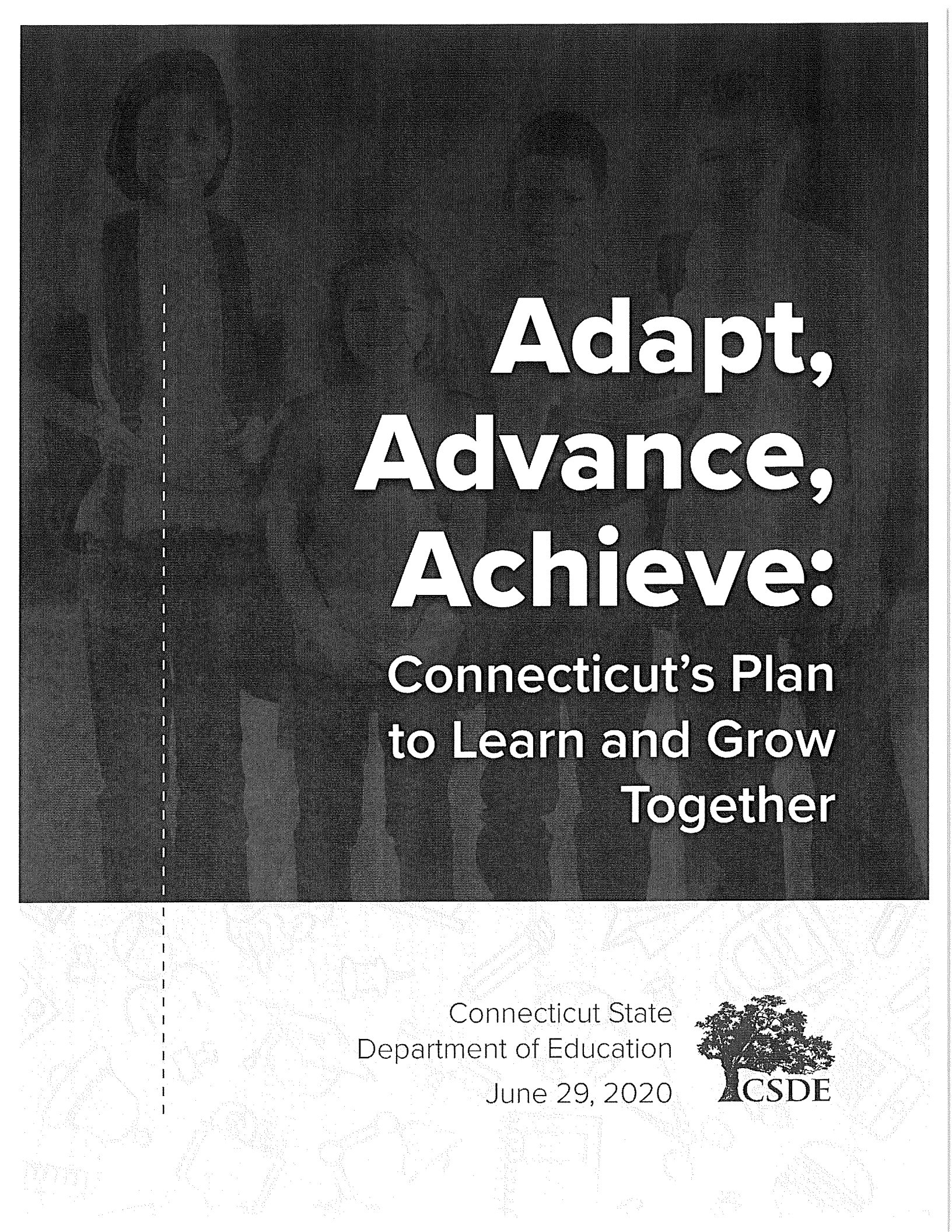
**From:** Soto, Chris  
**Sent:** Monday, June 29, 2020 2:33 PM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel; Stefon, Laura; Yazbak, Peter  
**Subject:** Final Draft

**Chris Soto**  
Director of Innovation & Partnerships  
CT State Department of Education

---

**From:** Wadowski, Andrea <Andrea.Wadowski@ct.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 29, 2020 2:33 PM  
**To:** Soto, Chris <Chris.Soto@ct.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: New draft

Here it is



# **Adapt, Advance, Achieve:**

## **Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together**

Connecticut State  
Department of Education

June 29, 2020



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## 1. Acknowledgments

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.

### **State of Connecticut**

Ned Lamont, Governor

### **Connecticut State Department of Education**

Dr. Miguel A. Cardona  
Commissioner of Education

Desi Nesmith  
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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.

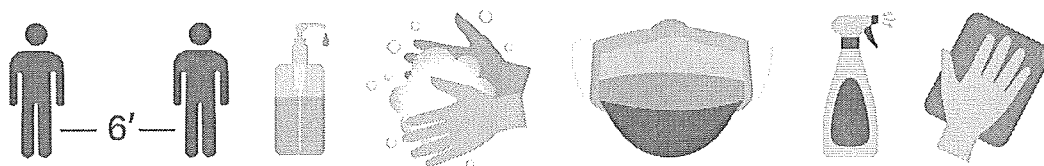
- Equitable Access to High Quality Online Curriculum Including Necessary Supports
  - Use funding to support further development, in consultation with state-provided resources, of high quality online curriculum, including necessary supports.
  - Unlike the initial wave of the pandemic during spring 2020 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/after school 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



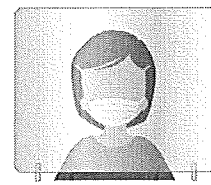
### Face Covering

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](#).

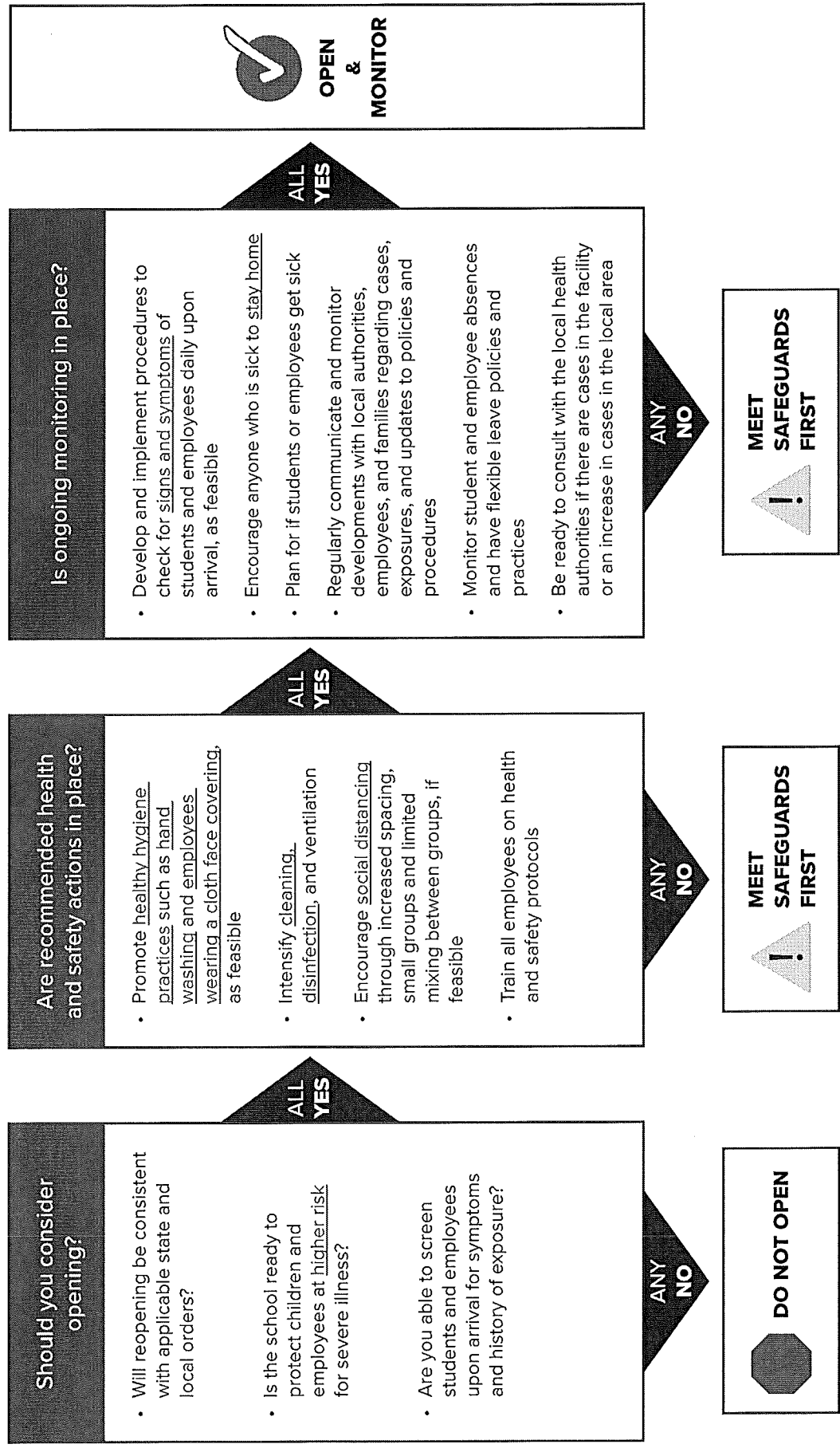
Also review the forthcoming DPH guidance.



## 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.

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)



## 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

### ★ 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	Longitudinal Data (Non-Assessment)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What standards were taught in-person pre-COVID and during distance learning?</li> <li>How does the previous teacher describe the student's strengths and weaknesses?</li> <li>How well did the student engage in distance learning?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early Indication Tool support level (Low-Medium-High), attendance, discipline, mobility, course failures, etc.</li> </ul>
Longitudinal Data (Assessment)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>K-Inventory, Smarter Balanced, NGSS, Alt. Assessments, LAS Links, IAB, F-IAB, Fall/Winter Benchmark, IEP Progress Reports</li> </ul>	

### ★ 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.*

### ★ 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.

1. Summer 2020

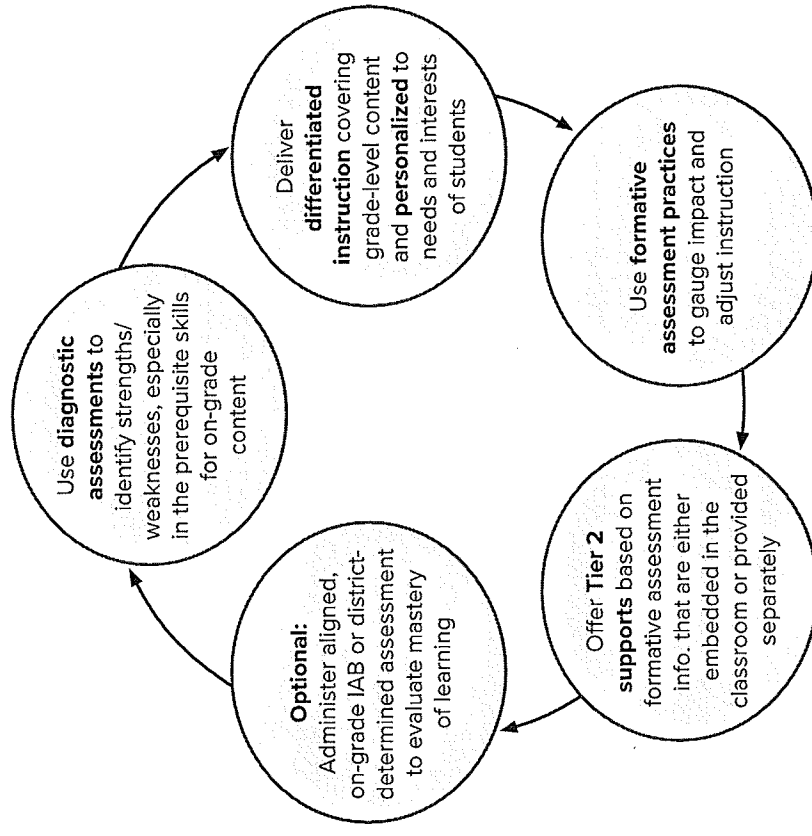
2. Start of the School Year

3. Rest of the School Year

4. End

### ★ 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.



### ★ 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 be 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:

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*“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.”*

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- 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.

- 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 \(multiple languages\)](#)



## McRitchie, Callie

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**From:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Sent:** Monday, June 29, 2020 2:38 PM  
**To:** Jan Hochadel  
**Subject:** Fw: Final Draft  
**Attachments:** CTReopeningSchools.pdf

Here it is. Advisory team will get separate email.

Miguel

**Miguel A. Cardona, Ed. D.**  
Commissioner of Education  
State of Connecticut

---

**From:** Soto, Chris  
**Sent:** Monday, June 29, 2020 2:33 PM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel; Stefon, Laura; Yazbak, Peter  
**Subject:** Final Draft

**Chris Soto**  
Director of Innovation & Partnerships  
CT State Department of Education

**From:** Wadowski, Andrea <Andrea.Wadowski@ct.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 29, 2020 2:33 PM  
**To:** Soto, Chris <Chris.Soto@ct.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: New draft

Here it is

## McRitchie, Callie

---

**From:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Sent:** Monday, June 29, 2020 10:14 AM  
**To:** Williams, Don [CT]; Hitchery, Ann Marie  
**Subject:** Re: Formal plan

We will get it to you before it goes public.... still working on final touches this morning.

Miguel

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

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**From:** Williams, Don [CT] <donw@cea.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 29, 2020 9:54 AM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel; Hitchery, Ann Marie  
**Subject:** Formal plan

Good morning, Miguel and Ann Marie,  
Hope you are both well. Will the plan be emailed out to the education stakeholders today? Thanks.  
Don Williams

Sent from my iPhone

## McRitchie, Callie

---

**From:** Williams, Don [CT] <donw@cea.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 29, 2020 9:54 AM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel; Hitchery, Ann Marie  
**Subject:** Formal plan

Good morning, Miguel and Ann Marie,  
Hope you are both well. Will the plan be emailed out to the education stakeholders today? Thanks.  
Don Williams

Sent from my iPhone

**McRitchie, Callie**

---

**From:** Williams, Don [CT] <donw@cea.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 23, 2020 11:55 AM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Subject:** Reopen plan

Hi Commissioner,

The governor said at his press conference regarding DMV offices today that he will speak about school reopening plans this Thursday. He also said that his plan is being circulated now among superintendents. Can that also be shared with CEA and AFT? Thanks.

Don Williams

Sent from my iPhone

## McRitchie, Callie

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**From:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 19, 2020 2:47 PM  
**To:** Hitchery, Ann Marie  
**Cc:** Cardona, Miguel; Soto, Chris; Mary Yordon; Stuart Savelkoul  
**Subject:** Monday's Discussion  
**Attachments:** Questions for Commissioner in Round Table 2020-06-19 18\_36\_16.pdf; ATT00001.htm

Good Afternoon,  
AFT-CT is looking forward to our discussion on Monday. We thought it would be helpful to share the attached outline.  
Have a great weekend.  
Jan

To: Commissioner Miguel Cardona  
From: AFT-CT  
Re: Recommendations and Questions Regarding Reopening of CT Public Schools  
Date: June 22, 2020

- A. (2-3 min) - Jan's been on the reopening committee for weeks. Can you please let us know where that committee stands and the work that was done?
- B. (5-7 mins) - The Governor has made several statements about returning to "normal" school in the fall. How do we combine the needs to get the students back in the classroom with science based research and safety standards?
  - a. AFT-CT supports the re-opening of schools for the 2020-2021 school year. We strongly feel that distance learning is not an adequate substitute for in-person learning. However, the safety of staff and students is our highest priority. We do not support a full return to school at this point in the pandemic.
- C. (5-7 mins) - Will we have a single state standard for elements of reopening?
  - i. Will there be guidelines to what opening a school district - or closing - will look like?
  - ii. We know not all students will return in the fall. What will be distance learning policy and guidelines?
- D. (5-7 mins) - What is your vision for TVAL for the 2020-2021 school year? Could there be a collaborative discussion as to what that will look like?

1. We recommend that the evaluation cycle stays as it has been from March 2020 in a suspended state. (Executive order from the Governor?)
2. We have begun to develop and would like to recommend an alternative checklist for effective service during this time of shifting instructional priorities.
3. We recommend that the evaluation plan cycle be re-started in the same phase of the three year cycle that was in place at the end 2020 school year, when and if it does resume, rather than moving forward to the next phase of the three year cycle.

E. (15-20 mins) - Is there a plan to have a state education calendar, with a Minimum School Day? Currently, the state does not dictate to districts the types of schedules they must follow: rather the law says students must be in school for 180 days and 900 hours. In keeping with that sentiment, the State could propose to waive the daily requirement of 180 days and decrease the minimum number of hours a student must be in the building to 45 hours per month during such time that we are navigating this Covid crisis. ([LINK](#) plans from McKeever)

F. (2 mins) - Will the SDE consider a joint working group (CEA/AFT/Front line workers/CAPPS) to hear from the school community?

- a. Possibility of regularly scheduled meetings?

G. (5-7 mins) - Regardless which plan is adopted, there needs to be clearly defined criteria for movement between more liberal and more restrictive plans. How will a decision be made to move to a more restrictive plan based on an increase in positive COVID-19 cases?

- a. Will this be a decision made by the school? District? State?

- b. What is the criteria for closing a school or district? One case?  
Two cases? Other criteria? Sick student? Sick staff? Sick  
parent?

H. ( 10 mins ) - Round Table

I. Questions for future discussion:

- a. Safety -
- b. Technology - Distance Learning
- c. Substitutes -
- d. FMLA/FFCRA
- e. Non Negotiables --
- f. Bussing -
- g. Funding-
- h. Communication with AFT/CEA before public
- i. Food Service -
- j. School Nurses -
- k. Para-educators-
- l. Reporting of COVID cases



## McRitchie, Callie

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**From:** Williams, Don [CT] <donw@cea.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 19, 2020 11:59 AM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Subject:** Phone conversation today

Hi Miguel,

If you are available for call today please let me know what time would work for you —I will make myself available.

We are very concerned about the governor's remarks on Channel 3 last night and realize we only have between now and Thursday to bend the arc of what is released at that time.

Thanks.

Don

Sent from my iPhone

## McRitchie, Callie

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**From:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 15, 2020 6:58 PM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Subject:** Re: Recommendations from Labor Groups

Thank you

On Jun 15, 2020, at 6:07 PM, Cardona, Miguel <Miguel.Cardona@ct.gov> wrote:

Jan,

Thank you for sharing this detailed document with considerations from the groups you support. I appreciate the format and the separation by different group. Please note we will be reviewing these recommendations carefully. Please let your colleagues know we appreciate their efforts to support our learners in a safe way thus far. We appreciate their input!

Best,

Miguel

**Miguel A. Cardona, Ed. D.**  
Commissioner of Education  
State of Connecticut

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**From:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 12, 2020 2:31 PM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Cc:** Soto, Chris  
**Subject:** Recommendations from Labor Groups

Good afternoon,

As I mentioned on our call yesterday, labor groups have been meeting to gather the thoughts and concerns of the school community not represented on the Advisory Committee (i.e. bus drivers, paraeducators, food service and custodial workers, and school nurses).

The attached is separated out by our five groups, and within each group is divided between recommended statewide guidance, and recommendations for agreements within districts. The statewide guidance could of course include a recommendation that districts reach agreements with their unions covering each of the areas we listed.

Thank you for taking their voices into consideration.

Have a great weekend and stay safe,

Jan

## McRitchie, Callie

---

**From:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Sent:** Monday, June 15, 2020 6:07 PM  
**To:** Jan Hochadel  
**Cc:** Soto, Chris; Nesmith, Desi; Russell-Tucker, Charlene; Hitchery, Ann Marie  
**Subject:** Re: Recommendations from Labor Groups

Jan,  
Thank you for sharing this detailed document with considerations from the groups you support. I appreciate the format and the separation by different group. Please note we will be reviewing these recommendations carefully. Please let your colleagues know we appreciate their efforts to support our learners in a safe way thus far. We appreciate their input!  
Best,

Miguel

**Miguel A. Cardona, Ed. D.**  
Commissioner of Education  
State of Connecticut

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**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Cc:** Soto, Chris  
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The attached is separated out by our five groups, and within each group is divided between recommended statewide guidance, and recommendations for agreements within districts. The statewide guidance could of course include a recommendation that districts reach agreements with their unions covering each of the areas we listed.

Thank you for taking their voices into consideration.

Have a great weekend and stay safe,

Jan

## McRitchie, Callie

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**From:** Jan Hochadel <JHochadel@aftct.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 12, 2020 2:32 PM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Cc:** Soto, Chris  
**Subject:** Recommendations from Labor Groups  
**Attachments:** Recommendations of School Reopening Labor Groups.docx

Good afternoon,

As I mentioned on our call yesterday, labor groups have been meeting to gather the thoughts and concerns of the school community not represented on the Advisory Committee (i.e. bus drivers, paraeducators, food service and custodial workers, and school nurses).

The attached is separated out by our five groups, and within each group is divided between recommended statewide guidance, and recommendations for agreements within districts. The statewide guidance could of course include a recommendation that districts reach agreements with their unions covering each of the areas we listed.

Thank you for taking their voices into consideration.

Have a great weekend and stay safe,

Jan

## I. BUS DRIVERS

### A. Recommendations for Statewide Guidance

#### CLEANING

- District must ensure that each bus should be cleaned between each run and should have adequate cleaning supplies
- District must assure follow all state and CDC guidelines for additional cleaning and disinfecting
- District must assure adequate training for drivers on COVID-19 cleaning procedures before that driver begins driving - how do we clean effectively
- The District must assure adequate scheduled time for drivers to clean

#### DISTANCING AND CENSUS

- Apply Summer Guidance for the Fall

#### SICK STUDENTS

- WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A STUDENT DOESN'T MEET TRANSPORT REQUIREMENTS?
  - Need clear, uniform direction from state
    - Don't want to refuse transport to students who may be waiting alone, where do they go? We need to ensure their safety AND the safety of those who are on the bus
    - Rules on masks must be clear

### B. Recommendations for Agreements within Districts

#### CLEANING

- Adequate cleaning supplies
  - provided by employer
  - On each bus
- Periodic deep cleaning

## DISTANCING AND CENSUS

- Assigned seating?
  - Monitors for younger children to keep them distanced
- SCHOOLS NEED TO BE A PARTNER IN ENFORCEMENT
  - often school does not intervene adequately
  - School needs to engage with parents on expectations
  - Students who do not engage in safe practices removed from run?
- Census needs to be hard-capped to allow distancing
- Guarantee pay for drivers with symptoms so they can stay home

## PPE

- All Provided by employer
- N95 masks
- Hand Sanitizer on every bus
- Meets all state and federal guidelines
- Right to refuse, without penalty or loss of pay, if not provided adequate equipment

## II. PARAEDUCATORS

### A. Recommendations for Statewide Guidance

- Districts should report on student census and assure that there are sufficient levels of paraeducators for the expected population
- State should provide clear guidance as to how spacing and PPE apply in the unique responsibilities of paras in a way that assures safety for children and employees.
- PPE consistent with above must be provided to all paras.

### B. Recommendations for Agreements within Districts

#### Job Descriptions for Paras

1. Paras will not:
  - a. Take temperatures of students
  - b. Give any medication to students
  - c. Delivering food
  - d. Write own lesson plans

2. If paras are expected to teach job rates would have to be negotiated.
3. Need to know the roles of para vs teacher vs special education teacher

#### Superintendents

1. Need to get Superintendents a survey ASAP with a immediate turn around back to committee with following information:
  - a. Before pandemic how many paras were in the district?
  - b. Before pandemic how many students in each classroom?
  - c. Before pandemic how many classroom of each grade?
  - d. How many students do they expect to return to school?
2. Once this information was received then the team could really look at how many paras are needed and what their job descriptions should now look like

#### Extra note

1. The team also was pleased that the State is now recognizing how important the role of the Para is in each school system.

### III. FOOD SERVICE

#### A. Recommendations for Statewide Guidance

- District must provide a plan to meet all social distancing requirements both among food service workers and affected among students and staff including meal locations and delivery

#### B. Recommendations for Agreements within Districts

- Prioritize providing meals/proper nutrition to every child and provide full pay to all employees including paid sick leave for anyone who is sick and/or has tested positive.
- Hot meals are generally not feasible; we recommend that staff put together cold bag breakfast and cold bag lunch (a subset of daily lunches that are going home can be microwavable meals).
- Due to social distancing and general safety concerns, cafeterias should not be used for student dining, cafeteria staff can deliver meals to classrooms and, for students that are home, assemble meals for pick-up.
- For pick-up meals, we recommend the continuation of allowing students to take home extra meals daily and extra, extra meals on Fridays (for the weekend). It is understood that this practice provides meals for the student's family members and is an important family and community support during this crisis.
- Safety Measures:



- Use the cafeteria space to allow kitchen staff to spread out (social distancing) for staging the various tasks (i.e. assembly of meals, delivery, pick-up). Kitchens are far too small to do effective social distancing.
- Ensure proper recommended ventilation.
- Implement staggered schedules to allow for greater social distancing, do not diminish worker pay.
- Establish specifically designed times and protocols for cleaning and sanitizing between activities, as recommended by the CDC. Setting aside specific times for these efforts is particularly important.
- Provide appropriate PPE; N95 masks and gloves
- Require staff to affirmatively confirm that they are symptom free daily

#### IV. CUSTODIANS

##### A. Recommendations for Statewide Guidance

Each District shall provide a plan to:

- Ensure adequate cleaning supply and ppe in stock prior to reopening
- Ensure full training comporting with CDC requirements and manufacturer's specifications on all cleaning products and procedures
- Areas of the school that do not need to be used/cleaned daily
- Lockers etc. and non-classroom staff and student use policy
- Develop and review realistic new cleaning schedule incorporating new goals
- Ensure Appropriate staffing levels
- District Wide Trial Run (one sample school day) to ensure new schedule is realistic to maintain over an extended period of time.

#### V. SECRETARIES/TECHNICAL/NURSES

##### A. Recommendations for Statewide Guidance

#### ENSURING SAFE WORKSPACES

- All work spaces and common areas comport with CDC and state social distancing guidelines with appropriate partitions
- "Sick" offices moved to larger spaces with partitions installed to separate beds where students lie waiting on parent pick-up

## TRAINING

- Districts shall provide a plan Training for ALL staff, students and parents including but not limited to:
  - Consistent protocols on what to do with students in distress either physically or emotionally
  - Orientation for all schools on not only Covid-related processes and protocols but also the job details (backups may be urgently needed for fall-winter 2<sup>nd</sup> wave). Prepare for “failure to fill” in school nurses and train retirees, subs, etc. Ensure schools are fully-staffed.
  - Mental health training in regards to student’s reaction to Covid.

## UNIQUE HEALTH CONCERNS

- Each district shall have a plan for dealing with Unique health concerns including but not limited to
  - Daily log for contract tracing-especially if playground time or any crossclasses, clubs, sports, rallies, dances etc. are happening
  - Asthmatic students (N95’s on wall or in classrooms if needed for emergencies)
  - Plan for immunizations requirements to be met despite Covid-19

### B. Recommendations for Agreements within Districts

## ENSURING SAFE WORKSPACES

- One-way flows for students, parents and staff
- Touchless equipment installed in shared spaces: bathrooms and break rooms, kitchens
- Don’t move children *en mass* each hour for different classrooms
- Careful lunch schedules with cleanings in between

## McRitchie, Callie

---

**From:** Williams, Don [CT] <donw@cea.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 12, 2020 9:31 AM  
**To:** Frances Rabinowitz  
**Cc:** Patrice McCarthy; Robert Rader; glungarini@casciac.org; Leake, Jeff [CT]; jhochadel@aftct.org; Cardona, Miguel  
**Subject:** Re: Proposed expansion of reopening options

Thank you, Fran. No objection at all to sharing the memo with your members. Same for our friends at CABA and CAS. At CEA and AFT we keep getting helpful information on the ground from our members, and I'm sure the same is true for you. With the suspension of the Ed subcommittee meetings, we would welcome continued dialogue between all of us to discuss and work to resolve the many important issues that we face.  
Don

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 12, 2020, at 6:40 AM, Frances Rabinowitz <frabinowitz@capss.org> wrote:

Don,

If there's no objection, I would like to share your memo with my membership. A few weeks ago, when we were discussing a statewide plan, you were in agreement and I verbally shared that with my members along with some of the conditions needed to make that happen- I.e. new college graduates ( not necessarily certified teachers) working in classrooms etc.

This memo and our discussions this week indicate that is no longer the stance for CEA and AFT and I need to clarify that for superintendents.

The memo is the most efficient way to do that but I don't like to forward without permission.

Please let me know if you have any objections.

Thank you,

Fran

On Jun 8, 2020, at 6:12 PM, Williams, Don [CT] <donw@cea.org> wrote:

Hi Fran, Patrice, Glenn and Bob,

Jeff, Jan and I have heard ideas and suggestions from our members as to reopening, both through surveys and direct conversations. I have attached a memo that addresses some of these issues.

In short, members strongly believe that there should be more input at the district level: local surveys of educators and parents as to how many staff and students will be at-risk by returning, how many students will parents keep at home, and an inventory of available classroom space and transportation capacity, among other issues. In some districts, schools are crowded; in others

enrollment has been declining and there is excess classroom space. These differences, combined with the fact that some districts are K-8 and others K-12, argue against a "one-size-fits-all" solution in terms of a statewide model.

Both CEA and AFT advocate that models for reopening not be limited to the various 80/20 possibilities that have been discussed. We have especially heard that high school students would be adversely impacted.

There are other important concerns that we cover in the attached memo, and we look forward to discussing them on Wednesday at the next subcommittee or stakeholder meeting.

Thank you for your important leadership in these challenging times.

Don Williams, Jan Hochadel and Jeff Leake

<CEA 2020-21 Recommendations.docx>

**McRitchie, Callie**

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**From:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 11, 2020 3:21 PM  
**To:** Williams, Don [CT]  
**Cc:** Hitchery, Ann Marie; Leake, Jeff [CT]  
**Subject:** Re: Questions about certification requirements

Thanks Don. Same here.

Miguel

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

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**From:** Williams, Don [CT] <donw@cea.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 11, 2020 2:02 PM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Cc:** Hitchery, Ann Marie; Leake, Jeff [CT]  
**Subject:** Re: Questions about certification requirements

Thank you very much. Will look forward to the conversation on Wednesday.

Sent from my iPhone

> On Jun 11, 2020, at 1:24 PM, Cardona, Miguel <Miguel.Cardona@ct.gov> wrote:  
>

**McRitchie, Callie**

---

**From:** Williams, Don [CT] <donw@cea.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 11, 2020 2:02 PM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Cc:** Hitchery, Ann Marie; Leake, Jeff [CT]  
**Subject:** Re: Questions about certification requirements

Thank you very much. Will look forward to the conversation on Wednesday.  
Don

Sent from my iPhone

> On Jun 11, 2020, at 1:24 PM, Cardona, Miguel <Miguel.Cardona@ct.gov> wrote:  
>

**McRitchie, Callie**

---

**From:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 11, 2020 1:24 PM  
**To:** Williams, Don [CT]; Hitchery, Ann Marie  
**Cc:** Leake, Jeff [CT]  
**Subject:** Re: Questions about certification requirements

Thanks Don for sharing the document and email. I would like that conversation about potential policy changes needed during our Wednesday call at 1pm. Nothing has been formally discussed but it has been mentioned in several meetings that I have been a part of. Would welcome your thoughts.  
Best,

Miguel

**Miguel A. Cardona, Ed. D.**  
Commissioner of Education  
State of Connecticut

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**From:** Williams, Don [CT] <donw@cea.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 11, 2020 11:16 AM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Cc:** Leake, Jeff [CT]  
**Subject:** Questions about certification requirements

Hello Commissioner,

Thank you for good meetings yesterday for the stakeholders and the re-open subcommittee. If you have any questions about the memo from CEA and AFT, please let me know.

I also wanted to raise a concern about something we are hearing about--possible waiver of teaching certification requirements. We are not in favor of such a waiver, and would appreciate a conversation to discuss the ramifications of this if the department is considering such a proposal for the fall.

Thank you very much for your help and assistance in this challenging process.

Don Williams  
Executive Director  
Connecticut Education Association

**McRitchie, Callie**

---

**From:** Williams, Don [CT] <donw@cea.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 11, 2020 11:16 AM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Cc:** Leake, Jeff [CT]  
**Subject:** Questions about certification requirements

Hello Commissioner,

Thank you for good meetings yesterday for the stakeholders and the re-open subcommittee. If you have any questions about the memo from CEA and AFT, please let me know.

I also wanted to raise a concern about something we are hearing about--possible waiver of teaching certification requirements. We are not in favor of such a waiver, and would appreciate a conversation to discuss the ramifications of this if the department is considering such a proposal for the fall.

Thank you very much for your help and assistance in this challenging process.

Don Williams  
Executive Director  
Connecticut Education Association



**McRitchie, Callie**

---

**From:** Williams, Don [CT] <donw@cea.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 8, 2020 2:07 PM  
**To:** Cardona, Miguel  
**Cc:** Nesmith, Desi; Hitchery, Ann Marie  
**Subject:** IMPORTANT expansion in plans for re-opening  
**Attachments:** CEA 2020-21 Recommendations.docx

Hi Commissioner,

I have been working with Jeff at CEA, Jan at AFT, and both AFT and CEA have heard ideas and suggestions from members as to reopening, both through surveys and direct conversations. I have attached a memo that addresses some of these issues.

In short, members strongly believe that there should be more input at the district level: local surveys of educators and parents as to how many staff and students will be at-risk by returning, how many students will parents keep at home, and an inventory of available classroom space and transportation capacity, among others. These concerns, combined with the fact that some districts are K-8 and others K-12, necessitate that models will need to vary from district to district. Consequently, there should not be a "one-size-fits-all" solution in terms of a statewide model.

Both CEA and AFT advocate that models for reopening are not limited to the various 80/20 possibilities that have been discussed.

There are other important concerns that we have not had a chance to discuss with the subcommittee, but will be important in any reopening plan. We cover most of them in the attached memo, and look forward to discussing them on Wednesday or at the next subcommittee meeting.

Thank you for your important leadership in these challenging times.

Don Williams, joined by Jan Hochadel and Jeff Leake

## **Recommendations for Protections and Procedures Regarding Education and Connecticut's Public Schools During the 2020-21 School Year**

From: CEA and AFT-CT

Re: School Year for 2020-21

Date: June 8, 2020

Teachers understand and appreciate the challenges involved in continuing the education of the state's children during a pandemic—they performed heroically when school buildings closed and a remote learning system needed to be immediately created.

The following recommendations are based on the input of teachers throughout Connecticut through formal surveys and informal conversations, and plans created by the National Education Association, and the American Federation of Teachers. *It is not meant to cover all issues that would be included in a formal plan, but rather to identify issues that are critical to adopting a framework for reopening.*

### **I. Threshold Issues for the 2020-21 School Year:**

1. *Safety of students and staff.* No re-opening of schools for in-class instruction shall occur without districts complying with CDC requirements and protections required by state and local public health officials.
2. *Equity for all districts.* The state must ensure that no district lacks for the resources and funding necessary for, a) safe reopening, including additional resources for staffing, personal protective equipment (PPE), classroom space, and transportation, and b) equitable access to education, especially in any remote learning component—laptops/electronic devices and internet access must be available for all students and teachers.
3. *Collaborative and cooperative district process.* There can be no “one-size fits all” solution. Districts have different grade configurations (K-12, K-8), different amounts of available classroom space and staff for in-person education, different capacities for transportation, different needs as to providing equitable education, and other differences and hurdles that impact reopening. Decisions on which model is best for reopening in a particular district must include input from local bargaining units, parents, staff and other stakeholders.

### **II. Addressing Conditions of Employment**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had and will continue to have a dramatic impact on teachers' conditions of employment. Bargaining must remain the bedrock of decision-making. In the 2020-21 school year, reaching a collaborative understanding of working conditions and responsibilities through bargaining and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) will continue to be crucial.

### **III. State of Connecticut Responsibilities:**

1. Provide the fiscal resources necessary to each district for the safe and equitable operation of the 2020-21 school year.
2. Provide technical assistance to districts in meeting safety, public health, and educational quality issues in an equitable manner, and assist districts in soliciting staff and parent input.
3. Investigate options but do not dictate back-to-school models that districts may consider, such as 80/20, 50/50, 40/60, 20/80 (in-school/remote - learning ratios for elementary, middle, and high school levels), or half-day, double-session models, so that a district and local bargaining units can determine what model best fits its unique infrastructure and staff resources.
4. Make other statewide changes required and described in Section VIII below.

### **IV. Considering Whether a Back-To-School Model is Workable for a District:**

The feasibility of any model for returning to in-school education will depend on factors that are unique to each district:

1. The number of students to be accommodated (minus those who are at-risk and those who are kept home).
2. The number of staff who are not at-risk.
3. Available classroom space.
4. The number of additional staff available for smaller (and therefore additional) classes.
5. The technology and hardware deficits that need correcting so that all students have access to remote learning.
6. Transportation capacity given social distancing requirements.
7. Other related factors.

Each district will need to poll educators, staff, and parents, and take inventory of its infrastructure, in order to answer the important questions above. The answers may eliminate certain models for return-to-school from consideration.

CEA's traditional position on remote learning has been that there is no substitute for the interaction and real learning that takes place in a classroom. Extended remote learning is not good for students, and it is not good for the teaching profession—it could further encourage those vendors and some “reform” advocates who would replace teachers with inferior online programs. In addition, many students desperately need the personal engagement that occurs in-person in order to succeed, and remote learning has raised significant concerns about equity and deepening disparities.

All education stakeholders agree, including both teacher unions, CEA and AFT, that some hybrid model of in-class and remote learning will be necessary for 2020-21 due to health and safety considerations.

How to distinguish different models under discussion:

1. Different models have ascribed a 20-percent value to each of the five weekdays.
2. For example, an 80/20 model would mean that a student would be in school for a full day four times a week, and at home for remote learning one day. A 40/60 model would mean two days in school, and three remote learning days at home. A primarily remote learning model—20/80—would be accomplished with one day in school, and four days remote learning (a 50-50 model could be achieved by alternating two days in school per week and three days in school per week, either on a weekly or monthly basis). Any model must be achievable in a safe way for students and staff.

A key question for a district is whether because of classroom space limitation issues, some grade levels would require more remote learning per week and less time in the classroom, in order to create extra classroom space required for social distancing.

Another option is for districts to provide some regular (more than one or two days a week) in-school education for all students through a much shorter school day and double sessions.

When schools are made safe, as many students as can be safely accommodated should be allowed to return in order to increase educational quality. Depending on the infrastructure of the district, the logistics of creating a safer school will often dictate the model(s) for how many students can safely be accommodated in any return to school, given that the density of students in classrooms and school buses must be reduced.

#### **V. Consider and assess the impact of decisions on racial and economic inequities:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare existing racial and economic disparities in this country. As we consider how to return and reopen our educational institutions, we must assess who will be affected by the decisions that are made.

At each stage of planning and implementation, racial and social justice must be in the forefront. Given the resources needed to respond to COVID-19—including additional staff, revised work hours, materials to clean and sanitize, personal protective equipment (PPE), and technology-related needs—it is critical that under-resourced schools and student populations receive the resources they need.

By being clear and explicit about who will be affected, we can avoid reopening and returning to schools that continue to perpetuate the practices and decisions that have traumatized communities that need additional resources.

Among the questions we should ask are:

1. Who will benefit from the choices and decisions being made, and who will be harmed?
2. Are we explicitly addressing racial and economic disparities and/or impacts? For whom?
3. Whose conditions are being improved?
4. As to planning and decision-making, now and ongoing into the school year, whose voices have been heard?

## **VI. Protections for At-Risk Students and Staff**

Adopt special protections and accommodations for at-risk individuals and those living with or caring for at-risk individuals.

COVID-19 disproportionately affects people 65 and older, and those with underlying chronic health conditions. The risk of severe COVID-19 infection increases for those with health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart conditions, and compromised immune systems, as well as with age. Reopening plans should consider providing these workers with the option to deliver instruction remotely either to students who will be learning remotely or students who are in the building under the supervision of qualified staff. At-risk students should have a similar option to learn remotely while their teachers and peers are in school. Protections and accommodations could include:

1. Remote-learning opportunities for at-risk students, as long as they can be provided equitably, bridging any digital-divide problems. Remote work for at-risk staff members and those who live with individuals at higher risk.
2. Extended leave benefits and disability accommodations for at-risk staff who cannot work remotely.
3. Extended leave benefits for staff who live with at-risk individuals.
4. Remote conferencing opportunities for parents or guardians.

## **VII. Public Health Protections Against COVID-19**

The physical health and well-being of students, families, and staff must be the first priority in any plan to reopen schools.

1. As described above, include protections for at-risk individuals, accommodating those with elevated health risks on an ongoing or as-needed basis to work or study from home.
2. Ensure that screening, testing, and monitoring designed to protect against transmission of COVID-19 comply with best practices and guidance from public health experts; that such practices are clear, consistently applied, and clearly communicated to minimize confusion, disruption, and discord; and

- are implemented without discrimination and in a manner that protects individual privacy.
3. Provide PPE and all other protections as recommended by the CDC and state and local public health officials.
  4. Evaluate the effectiveness of the use of masks and other PPE during summer school to inform continued and improved use of such PPE in the fall, and investigate upgrading HVAC systems and other infrastructure improvements that improve air quality and safety.
  5. Adopt policies for responding in the event that a student or staff member becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms, has a positive COVID-19 diagnostic test, or has been exposed to someone with COVID-19.
  6. Adopt robust mental health support services for students and employees. Train staff in trauma-informed practices, monitor and support students upon their return to school for signs of food and housing insecurity, domestic violence or abuse at home, or grief and trauma due to the devastation of the pandemic. Assure that Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) are robust and easy to access, including benefits related to mental health and substance-use disorders.
  7. Protect employees who refuse to work under conditions they reasonably believe pose a danger to their health and/or safety, making sure they have an enforceable right to refuse to work under abnormally dangerous conditions, with pay and without discrimination or retaliation, until such conditions are resolved.
  8. Provide whistleblower protections to guarantee that education employees and contractors working in schools are protected against retaliation for reporting or raising concerns about workplace safety with respect to COVID-19, whether they discuss those concerns with fellow employees, the employer, government agencies, the public, or the news media.
  9. Anticipate a second wave of illness and plan for remote operations and alternative assignments if schools are once again forced to physically close in whole or in part.

## **VIII. Contingency Plan**

Given the infectious nature of COVID-19, and that any effective vaccine or treatment is unlikely to be available before schools reopen in the fall, every school that reopens for in-person learning must have in place a contingency plan detailing under what circumstances it will close, in whole or in part, due to an increase in COVID-19 infections that make its operations no longer safe. The contingency plan must address both when such closures will occur, and how learning will continue through remote learning in the event of such closures.

## **IX. Strengthening Educational Quality Under Challenging and Unprecedented Circumstances**

Teachers and school support staff have responded to the COVID-19 crisis with thoughtfulness and determination, creating an entirely new educational delivery system remotely with no advanced notice and little, if any, training. The pandemic has proven that teachers, when given the freedom to teach, will rise to the occasion to deliver high-quality instruction to their students.

Going forward, the COVID-19 pandemic poses daunting challenges for ensuring the continuity of education and school-based services. Prolonged school closures, when combined with the social distancing and other necessary measures that schools must take to reopen safely during the pandemic, inevitably have resulted in lost instructional time and learning under less-than-optimal circumstances. These challenges are particularly acute for the most vulnerable students.

1. Plan for addressing trauma experienced by students and staff members: As the American Academy of Pediatrics has recognized, efforts to ensure continuity of instruction must be “balanced by a recognition of the likely continued distress of educators and students that will persist when schools reopen” such that realistic academic expectations must be established, or else “school will likely become a source of further distress for students (and educators) at a time when they need additional support.”
2. Ensure a balanced curriculum: Although limits on instructional time make it challenging to provide instruction outside of core subjects, continuity plans should strive for a balanced curriculum that includes arts and other enrichment instruction, physical education, and other non-core learning areas.
3. Accessibility for students with disabilities: Consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), parents, students and the educational system should collaborate on the best steps to remediate students’ needs due to this spring’s closures, and collaborate going forward on alternative approaches needed to comply with IEP requirements that will be implemented through remote learning in the new school year.
4. Provide policy and technical support for educators engaged in digital learning: Online tools can provide critical capacity and efficiencies in the current environment, but not all platforms are appropriate for use in schools. Districts have a responsibility to review technology vendors, ensure compliance with the Families Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other privacy laws, safeguard student privacy, and provide training to all educators.
5. Ensure quality education with roles fulfilled by properly certified educators and staff, and avoid subcontracting for services provided by staff.
6. Professional development: Professional development and collaboration time for teachers will be more important than ever. This should include not only relevant content, but should address teaching in the new environment, including the technology of online platforms and programs, and trauma-informed practices.

7. Provide clear expectations for educators on how to engage remotely with students and parents, as well as how students and parents should engage with teachers remotely: School districts should specify how educators should contact students and parents in a remote environment, and should set clear policies about the use of social media accounts for work purposes. If certain platforms are off limits, the district should provide educators with workable alternatives. To safeguard educator privacy, districts should provide separate devices for remote learning purposes and should not require educators to use personal devices. School districts should specify how students and parents should contact teachers remotely, and establish acceptable use policies for students and parents that will preserve the integrity of the teachers' work product.
8. Build on the community school model: Incorporate the collaborative partnerships and community resources families have used, including meals, medical care, and essential services.
9. Do not waste limited time with standardized testing: The COVID-19 crisis has brought new attention to the true fundamentals of education—critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, communication, and engagement, all of which are not fairly or equitably represented in standardized testing. Connecticut should continue to suspend standardized testing and focus the limited education time on student learning. Special effort will be needed for appropriate diagnosis of students' learning levels and needs given the truncated traditional school year. These diagnostics should be teacher-friendly and accompanied by access to relevant instructional resources and supports to fill gaps.
10. Continue suspension of inappropriate TVAL: The 2020-21 school year will continue to be at odds with the teacher evaluation system (TVAL) designed for an entirely different environment and circumstance. As a result, Connecticut should continue the suspension of TVAL for 2020-21. Districts should develop new expectations for instruction that alternates between in-person learning and remote learning, and informal evaluation focused on helpful feedback should continue.
11. Comport or otherwise suspend the 180-day school year attendance requirement with the modified, "hybrid" schedules that can be adopted by districts.
12. Monitor the caseloads of nurses, social workers, counselors, psychologists, occupational, speech and physical therapists, special education teachers and managers, and other specialized instructional support personnel to ensure that their caseloads are appropriate: Where necessary, provide more staffing to meet student needs.
13. Role of data: Beyond refocusing schools on the fundamental values of public schooling—a focus that has been lost over the years—it is also time to repurpose the role of information and data in our schools. For too long officials have used school and student data solely for accountability purposes. As we reopen our schools, we should use data to guide instruction, identify and share best practices.



## **X. Financing**

Connecticut is in better shape than most states because of its \$2 billion rainy day fund. Schools are essential to the continuing education of Connecticut's students and the stability of communities, and any re-opening of schools must have the resources to implement safety precautions and protocols. The state should:

1. Immediately allocate the required funding for coronavirus-related educational expense. This would include but not be limited to costs for PPE, testing, additional classroom space; staffing costs due to additional/reduced-size classes; transportation costs; etc.
2. Immediately allow access to School Construction Bonding Funds to be used for coronavirus related infrastructure expenses. This would include but not be limited to reconfiguring classrooms, installing protective barriers, improvements in HVAC systems, and other related protection and precaution expense.
3. For the next fiscal year, raise the 2% carry-forward (current law) to 5% of any surplus education funds into a non-lapsing municipal education fund to be used solely for educational purposes and under purview of Board of Education, without requiring board of finance approval.
4. Join Maine and other states that are rejecting Betsy DeVos' "guidance" for the federal CARES dollars for education in a compact; the guidance recommends allocating more CARE dollars to private and not public schools (Connecticut has received \$111 million in CARES dollars for education).