



At Our Core

Newtown Public Schools Re-Entry Plan

Fall 2020

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Committee Members

In preparing to welcome all students and staff back to school safely for the 2020-2021 school year, a Re-Entry Committee was formed to draft a plan that would meet the unique educational and social/emotional needs of students and staff of the Newtown Public Schools. The committee, a cross-section of staff, parents, administrators, and Board of Education officials, met weekly to develop a feasible plan that would appropriately address the health and safety priorities in compliance with requirements and recommendations, including mandatory and recommended training for staff, outlined in the State of Connecticut's Reopening Plan. Members of the committee, as well as their sub-committee groupings, are listed below.

I. Governance (Communication)

Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue - Superintendent

Kristen Bonacci – Newtown Middle School PTA President

Dr. Matthew Correia – Reed Intermediate School Principal

Kristin Larson – Grant Specialist

Meredith Walsky – Sandy Hook School Teacher

II. Wellness (Spread Mitigation)

Dr. Michelle Ku – Newtown Board of Education Chair

Anne Dalton - Nursing Supervisor

Donna Culbert – Newtown Health Director

Lisa Kilcourse – Head O'Meadow School Counselor

Karen Powell – Newtown High School Nurse (Union President)

Kerri Sommer – Sandy Hook School Special Education Teacher

III. Instruction & Technology (Teaching & Learning)

Anne Uberti – Assistant Superintendent

Dr. Frank Purcaro – Director of Teaching and Learning

Carmella Amodeo – Director of Information Technology

Tracy Galassi – Hawley School Teacher

Michelle Hiscavich – Director of Visual and Performing Arts

Suzanne Hurley – Middle Gate School Library Media Specialist

Andrew San Angelo – Newtown Middle School Library Media Specialist

Induk Song – Reed Intermediate School Teacher

Allyson Story – Parent

John Vouros – Newtown Board of Education Member

IV. **Social/Emotional**

Dr. Kathy Gombos - Sandy Hook School Principal

Bret Nichols - K-12 School Counseling Director

Jennifer Hoag – Newtown High School School Psychologist

Rebekah Harriman-Stites – Newtown Board of Education Member

Keristan Raccio – Newtown High School Teacher

Kimberly Shapiro – Hawley School Counselor

V. **Facilities**

Christopher Geissler – Middle Gate School Principal

Erin Ardino – Sandy Hook School Principal’s Executive Secretary (Union President)

Ron Bienkowski – Director of Business

Robert Gerbert – Director of Facilities

Thomas Kuroski – Newtown High School Teacher (Union President)

Mark Pompano – Director of Security

Sharon Vetrano – Reed Intermediate School Teacher

Jack Vichiola – Newtown High School Head Custodian

VI. **School Operations (Logistics)**

Dr. Kimberly Longobucco – Newtown High School Principal

Marlene Bucci – Middle Gate School Behavioral Interventionist Paraeducator (Union President)

Alan Colangelo – All-Star Transportation Terminal Manager

Suzanne D’Eramo – Director of Human Resources

Matthew Memoli – Athletic Director

Thomas Pescarmona – Newtown High School Teacher

Deborah Petersen – Director of Pupil Services

Joseph Stango – Whitsons General Manager

Introduction

In March of 2020, when Newtown Public Schools closed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, educators knew teaching and learning would be transformed dramatically for years to come. The virus impacted traditional ways of life, not only in our own community but throughout the United States and the world. Despite adverse conditions under which everyone worked, staff and parents rose to meet the challenges, demonstrating incredible strength and resilience. Kitchens, living rooms, and home offices turned into makeshift classrooms in order to support students within a remote learning environment.

As a result, and in harmony with our District's core values and beliefs, the school community came alive with visible acts of creativity, nurturing, and support during the implementation of Newtown's *Alternative Learning Plan (ALP)*. Teachers created new lessons using technologies outside the familiar and intimate environment of the classroom. Counselors and staff identified and supported students who struggled or were disengaged. Administrators worked collaboratively to ensure teachers and parents had the necessary resources to guide students appropriately. Parents and caregivers, unexpectedly thrust into the role of home school instructors, facilitated learning and nurtured their children to stay engaged throughout the remainder of the school year. Students learned very quickly to adapt, the best they could, to a brand new world of school that required a higher degree of self-direction, independence, and persistence. Although not ideal nor perfect, staff and parents worked as partners with students' best interests at the core.

Connecticut's Plan

As COVID-19 data trends in Connecticut gradually improved, Governor Lamont developed a phased approach to reopen businesses and industries in the State. In early July, the Connecticut Department of Education, in collaboration with the Governor's Office, shared a clear and comprehensive rationale for reopening schools in the Fall of 2020. The reopening plan, [*Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together*](#) acknowledged input from a variety of key stakeholders:

- Thousands of parents and students who participated in surveys
- Connecticut PK–12 Reopen Committee
- Reopen Regional Advisory Teams
- Learn from Home Task Force
- Connecticut Office of Policy and Management
- Connecticut Department of Public Health
- Connecticut Office of Early Childhood Education

Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.

~ Vincent Van Gogh

Guided by these six principles, the Connecticut State Department of Education directed all school districts to return to school for full-time, in-person instruction at the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, as long as public health data continues to support this model. In addition to preparing for full-time instruction, school districts must also prepare for a partial reopening (hybrid model) or school closure (remote learning model) in the event that public health conditions change. Based on the Connecticut plan and public health authority guidance, Newtown Public Schools is planning for an in-person learning model, with all students returning to school full time in the Fall. **The decision to change to another model will be based on the level of public health risk as determined by local and state public health officials.**

Low Risk (Minimal to No Community Transmission)	Moderate Risk (Moderate Community Transmission)	High Risk (Widespread Community Transmission)
Fall 2020 Plan	As Needed	As Needed
In-Person Learning Model	Hybrid Model (In-Person and Remote)	Improved Distance Learning Model
All Students Full Days/5 Days A Week	50% of students are in-person 50% are remote - groups alternate days.	Students and staff quarantine at home and learning is remote

The best way to predict the future is to invent it.

~ Alan Kay

Newtown Public Schools Planning

As an organizational strategy, Newtown committee members focused their work around six “pillars” that defined critical elements of the plan: **Governance, Wellness, Instruction and Technology, Social/Emotional Learning, Facilities, School Operations**. This provided a sound framework for our plan - incorporating the essential and logistical requirements relevant to safety, health, social/emotional, and instruction.

Pillars

Governance: The focus of the Governance Pillar is to establish the vision and priorities for the re-entry plan, oversee the development of the plan, and ensure effective communications regarding re-entry for students, families, and staff.

Wellness: The focus of the Wellness Pillar is to promote the health and well-being of our community as we return to school this fall.



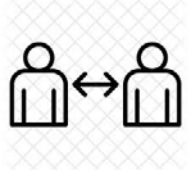





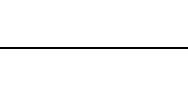
Instruction and Technology: The focus of the Instruction and Technology Pillar is to establish a plan for the Newtown Public Schools’ Community that best meets student learning needs for both in-person and online instruction.




Social/Emotional Learning: The focus of the Social/Emotional Learning Pillar is to create a plan to best support the social/emotional needs of all students, families and staff as we transition back to school.

Facilities: The focus of the Facilities Pillar is to identify practices and resources to protect the health and safety of students and staff across all Newtown campuses and within our buildings.

School Operations: The focus of the School Operations Pillar is to create a logistical plan that supports a safe, organized transition back to school in regard to building usage, outdoor spaces, food services, athletics, and transportation.

The Newtown Re-Entry Plan outlines areas of focus and action steps for each of the “pillars” to support feasible implementation across all buildings. Below is a **Summary** of the key components of Newtown’s Re-Entry Plan in alignment with State guidelines and requirements.

Component of Re-Entry Plan		
	Parents can temporarily choose for their children not to return to school and continue with remote learning. Parents will receive information about how to make that choice in early August.	✓
	All students and staff will wear face coverings/masks inside school buildings , and schools will supply masks to any student or staff who does not have a mask.	✓
	Newtown schools will maximize social distancing between student workstations in classroom spaces, 6 feet where feasible, 3 feet at a minimum.	✓
	For additional protection, students will be provided with individual plastic desk dividers for use at desks and tables throughout the day and all staff will be provided with face shields.	✓
	If families choose remote learning or if schools move to the hybrid model or full remote learning model, there will be more interaction with teachers and peers, more synchronous instruction, and a high level of structure to each school day.	✓
	Students will move through their school day in defined cohorts in grades K-8 and, where feasible in grades 9-12.	✓
	Maintaining cohorts helps mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19 and allows for contact tracing among and between cohorts when necessary.	✓
	All staff will have mandatory training on signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and health and safety protocols prior to students returning to school. Students will receive instruction on health and safety protocols on the first day of school.	✓
	Staff and students (or parents or guardians) will need to perform self-assessments before school to identify any COVID-19 symptoms and stay home if symptoms are consistent with COVID-19.	✓
	Staff and students will also need to inform the school if they have had contact with someone positive with COVID-19.	✓
	School nurses at each of the buildings will act as liaisons for health and safety, responsible for responding to questions from staff and families regarding COVID-19.	✓

	A district compliance liaison will coordinate system-wide questions regarding COVID-19 and related issues. Our district compliance liaison is: Anne Uberti, Assistant Superintendent.	✓
	All facilities will be cleaned and disinfected prior to student arrival and enhanced cleaning protocols will be in place for all buildings during the school day.	✓
	Enhancements will be made to existing HVAC systems to increase ventilation rates.	✓
	For schools and classrooms without HVAC systems, air purifiers with HEPA filters will be provided.	✓
	Outdoor instruction will be encouraged, when possible.	✓
	Transportation will resume at capacity. All bus drivers and riders will wear masks and there will be assigned seating for students.	✓
	Bus monitors will be used for the first two weeks to ensure students are following safety protocols.	✓

Valerie Strauss, in her article in the Washington Post, observed “Every decision, every interaction, every collaboration would aim to nourish well-being, inspire inclusion and equity, and strengthen the school community as a whole. Everyone participates, everyone contributes, everyone is responsible for the well-being of every student and every student is cared for.” While we recognize these are immensely stressful times for everyone, staff and families must remain partners to support our students and each other. At the core of Newtown’s plan is a strong reliance on the flexibility, adaptability, responsibility, and trust of all school community members. Educating our children is not only a moral imperative but a shared responsibility, and together we must put our students’ interests at the forefront while balancing the health and safety needs of everyone in the community.



Pillar I: Governance



The focus of the Governance Pillar is to establish the vision and priorities for the re-entry plan, oversee the development of the plan, and ensure effective communications regarding re-entry for students, families, and staff.

Planning and Coordination	
1.	The Newtown Public Schools Re-Entry Plan is designed to be in alignment with State of Connecticut recommendations and requirements and is informed by input from the Re-Entry Committee, comprised of more than 40 members representative of all stakeholders.
2.	The Superintendent will hold weekly, public Re-Entry Committee meetings to inform the development and implementation of the Reopening Plan and will post meeting minutes and videos on the Town and BOE websites.
3.	The Newtown Public Schools Re-Entry Plan will be reviewed and approved by Donna Culbert, Director of the Newtown Health District, and the Newtown Board of Education.
4.	Anne Uberti, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, will serve as the District COVID-19 Health and Safety Compliance Liaison, will be responsible for providing information to parents, staff and administrators regarding health and safety requirements and will ensure compliance of health and safety protocols as outlined in this document.
5.	School nurses will serve as School COVID-19 Health and Safety Liaisons and will engage students, staff, and families with COVID-19 regarding health and safety concerns, as appropriate.
Communication	
6.	The Newtown Public Schools Re-Entry Plan will be shared with staff, students and families via School Messenger and will be posted on the District website available in multiple languages and accessible to those with visual and/or hearing impairments.
7.	The Superintendent will meet regularly with community groups, such as PEAC (Parent Educator Advisory Council) and PTA Presidents, and will hold periodic open office hours for parents, staff and community members in order to ensure two-way communication regarding the Re-Entry plan and any new and/or relevant developments following the reopening.

8.	The Superintendent will present the initial plan for reopening schools to the Board of Education, along with estimated associated expenses, and will continue to provide regular updates to the Board throughout the duration of the pandemic.
9.	Weekly updates will be shared directly with the school community via School Messenger and posted on the District website in order to provide critical information regarding policy, protocol or health data changes that may impact school operations, including the need for changes to restrictions and/or temporary school closure as well as guidance on school protocols related to health and safety.
10.	Surveys will be sent to families and staff in July and again in early August to solicit information regarding plans to return to school in the fall in order to properly align adequate resources for a successful reopening.
11.	Newtown Public Schools will comply with all state and federal family engagement requirements (e.g., Title I requirements) during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Human Resources Considerations	
12.	The Superintendent will ensure that the district is in compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements related to personnel, including but not limited to EEOC guidance related to ADA and the COVID-19 pandemic.
13.	Plans will be developed in order to engage all staff to the greatest degree possible, either remotely or in-person, to support a successful reopening.
14.	A substitute plan will be developed to ensure continuity of instruction.
15.	Personnel needs will be addressed to meet all aspects of the Re-Entry Plan.



Pillar II: Wellness



The focus of the Wellness Pillar is to promote the health and well-being of our community as we return to school this fall. Ensuring the health and safety of our students and staff is the most important consideration in designing a re-entry plan for Newtown schools.

The primary means of preventing the spread of disease are based on:

- limiting the number of contacts each person has
- consistent use of face coverings or face masks
- frequent hand and surface disinfection
- physical distancing

While it may be challenging for schools to satisfy all of these measures at all times, the action steps listed below will be taken in order to promote a healthy and safe school environment. These action steps are in alignment with current guidelines from the CDC, the American Academy of Pediatrics, CT Department of Public Health, and the Newtown Health Department. Some action steps will shift dependent upon the level of community transmission present at any given time.

Education and Training	
1.	The Supervisor of Nursing will create training sessions to be delivered to all staff via an online training platform at the start of the school year to review new public health policies and protocols, as well as standard health practices used to prevent the spread of disease. Building administrators will ensure substitutes receive the training when entering schools.
2.	The Supervisor of Nursing will design training presentations which will be shared with all students and parents at the start of the school year to review new public health policies and protocols, as well as standard health practices used to prevent the spread of disease.
3.	The Supervisor of Nursing will provide all staff, students and parents with a COVID-19 screening checklist when conducting daily health assessments prior to leaving for school in order to identify fever and other possible COVID-19 symptoms. Anyone with a fever of 100 degrees (F) or higher will be excluded from school.
4.	Professional learning time will be added to the staff calendar in order to provide additional opportunities for planning and training.

Health Supplies

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| 5. | Each school will have 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. |
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Immunizations and Health Assessments

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| 6. | Students must be up to date with immunizations. |
| 7. | Students must fulfill requirements for Health Assessments prior to students enrolling in school. Health assessments are also required for all students in grades six or seven and grades nine or ten. |

Minimizing Exposure: Physical or Social Distancing


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| 8. | Physical or social distancing between student workstations will be maximized, achieving 6 feet when possible, 3 feet at minimum. |
| 9. | Desks will face in the same direction (rather than facing each other) or students will sit on only one side of tables, spaced apart. |
| 10. | Clear plastic desk dividers will be used in all elementary and intermediate classrooms and in middle school and high school classrooms when appropriate. |
| 11. | Outside spaces will be utilized for students to assemble while maintaining maximum social distancing requirements. |
| 12. | Building principals will create plans to minimize crowding in hallways during passing times. |
| 13. | Newtown High School will allow any student with free periods or study halls at the beginning or end of the day to leave campus in order to reduce crowding. |

Minimizing Exposure: Face Coverings/Face Masks

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| 14. | All students and staff must wear face coverings or masks that completely cover the nose and mouth while on buses and inside the school buildings with exceptions only for those for whom it is not safe to do so due to medical conditions or disability. |
| 15. | Temporary exemptions for wearing masks/face coverings will be made where masks may need to be removed to provide appropriate special education services. In those cases, other mitigating strategies such as plastic face shields, plastic desk dividers, and maximizing social distancing will be implemented. |

16.	Staff members who work directly with students will wear face coverings or masks as much as possible; however, there may be times when these staff members must remove face coverings or masks in order to provide effective instruction (e.g. speech instruction), and in those situations, a face shield or other barrier will be used and, when possible, physical distance from students will be increased to more than 6 feet.
17.	Students and staff will be encouraged to wear their own face covering or mask and schools will maintain a supply to provide one, if needed.
18.	Masks with a filtered valve will be prohibited.
Managing and Containing Illness	
19.	Staff and families will be instructed to inform the school nurse and stay home if they are sick with COVID-19 symptoms or have been exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19. This information will be kept in a confidential health record.
20.	Families in need of a thermometer may request one from the school nurse.
21.	School nurses will track attendance patterns and work closely with the Health Director for case identification and contact tracing.
22.	Any staff member or student who is feeling ill during the school day should report immediately to the nurse.
23.	Each building principal will designate an isolation room to accommodate students exhibiting possible COVID-19 symptoms until a parent/guardian arrives. Students will remain supervised. Anyone entering the room will be required to wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and log their visit.
24.	If there is a known confirmed case of COVID-19 in the school setting, the Superintendent and Health Director will first be notified. All staff and families in the district will then be notified. The Superintendent will work in coordination with the Newtown Health Director to determine the time needed to assess the situation, trace individual contacts, and take appropriate cleaning measures.
25.	All staff and families of students who were in contact with a COVID-19 student or staff member will be notified (e.g. classmates, bus mates, sports teammates).
26.	It is strongly recommended that families have contingency plans in place should a school need to close temporarily, or a student needs to quarantine due to COVID-19.
27.	The District will utilize community and school-based indicators, which are expected to be released by the Connecticut Department of Health prior to the opening of schools, to guide decisions regarding when schools should be closed.
28.	The Superintendent will notify and consult with the Connecticut Department of Education immediately if contemplating class cancellation or school closure.

29.	In the event of a school closure, the schools will be prepared to provide continuity of learning as outlined in the Instruction and Technology section of this document.
30.	Staff and families are required to quarantine for 14 days and are strongly encouraged to follow any other directives provided by the State of Connecticut when returning from travel-restricted states and foreign countries.
31.	In support of mitigating infection, touchless hand sanitizer stations will be located throughout school buildings.
Returning to School After Illness/Close Contact with Illness	
32.	Staff and students who test positive for COVID-19 must follow guidelines from the Newtown Health District and provide documentation of a negative test result or physician's note to the school nurse upon return.
33.	Staff and students who have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 should follow CDC Guidelines by quarantining for 14 days and monitoring for possible symptoms.
School Day Considerations	
34.	Student cohorts will be maintained whenever possible.
35.	Visual markings will be used, as needed, to assist students in maintaining physical distancing.
36.	Each student will be provided with a personal, portable plastic barrier for added protection. Students will be responsible for regularly cleaning their own barrier. Teachers will assist younger students in ensuring daily cleaning of their barriers.
37.	Classroom doors may be left in the open position to reduce contact; students will be reminded to sanitize or wash hands following the use of door handles; paper towels will also be placed by doors to use when opening door handles.
Attendance	
38.	Staff and parents of students who have concerns about health risks related to COVID-19, including pre-existing conditions which may increase risk, should consult their health care provider prior to reentering the school setting.
39.	Students not participating in on-site learning will be expected to attend classes online. Attendance will be taken and monitored.
40.	Student absences due to illness including absences from distance learning, should be reported to the school nurse.



41.	Students not participating in on-site learning due to illness may choose distance learning on days when they feel ill but well enough to participate virtually.
42.	Students who are quarantined due to exposure to COVID-19 will be expected to participate virtually.
43.	Building principals will proactively follow up with disengaged students and families.
44.	Staff members who are unable to return to work should notify Human Resources as soon as possible and an alternative work assignment will be developed.



Pillar III: Instruction and Technology



The focus of the Instruction and Technology Pillar is to establish a plan for the Newtown Public Schools’ Community that best meets student learning needs for both in-person and online instruction.

Initial Re-Entry	
1.	The Newtown Public Schools are planning a fall reopening that includes a full-time instructional model with 100% student return to physical classrooms. (See <i>Newtown Public Schools, Modes of Learning.</i>)
2.	Parents and students may voluntarily and temporarily choose not to participate in the return to school. Those students will be required to participate in remote learning.
3.	Students not participating in the initial return to school, or who decide to shift to distance learning during the school year, will receive synchronous instruction via Google Meet by their regular teacher. While this will be the primary model for instruction, in some cases, it may be necessary to designate a “distance learning teacher” to provide primary instruction to at-home students of a particular grade or subject area.
Identifying Learning Gaps, Equity, Inclusion, and Access	
4.	Upon return to school in the fall, teachers will meet in vertical grade level and/or subject specific team meetings to discuss student academic engagement during the 2019-20 distance learning timeframe. Professional development time prior to the start of school will be designated for this purpose.
5.	All students in grades K-9 will be administered the NWEA Fall assessment. Protocols will be developed to ensure both in-school and virtual administration of the assessment.
6.	All students in grades K-9 will have access to IXL Learning ELA and Math which includes a real-time diagnostic that will be used to identify gaps in learning. All students in grades K-8 have access to Lexia Learning which also includes a real-time diagnostic component to aid in identifying gaps in reading skills.
7.	All students in grades K-9 will be provided with a Chromebook that can be utilized any time distance learning is implemented. Students in grades 10-12 will use personal devices; however, any student in grades 10-12 needing a device will be provided one. WiFi Hotspots will be provided to students and families previously identified as having issues with online access.

Instructional Materials	
8.	In most cases, sharing of materials will be discouraged; younger students will be provided individual contained items. In situations where materials must be shared, they will be cleaned and sanitized following CDC Guidelines. In school, students will use either an assigned or personal computer.
9.	Students will not use lockers in any building; school materials should be carried with the student in a personal backpack.
10.	Books handled by students or staff will be quarantined for 72 hours before redistribution.
Specials	
11.	Participation in specials will be required regardless of the mode of learning. Strategies will be employed in each special class to reduce crowding and maximize social distancing in on-site settings.
12.	When possible, music curricula that pose health risks, such as singing or playing certain instruments, will take place in spaces that allow for a minimum of 12 feet of distance between students (including outside spaces). When not possible, modifications will be made to specific curriculum to provide related foundational skill work or educational experiences.
13.	Physical education curricula will be modified to ensure that instructional design is appropriate to the space and ensures separation and distancing between students during activities.
14.	Physical education will focus on activities, exercises, and sports that are teacher-led, but performed individually using marked off areas, stations, or staggered participation to ensure separation of students.
15.	Book borrowing from school libraries will follow the guidelines as outlined in #10 in the Instructional Materials section above. In addition, on-line resources that allow for student use of electronic books and audiobooks will be available.
Paraeducators	
16.	Paraeducators are integral members of the instructional team and will be fully utilized and engaged in the instructional plan as outlined in this document.

Special Education

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| 17. | In accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidelines, this plan is prepared 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. |
| 18. | In accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidelines, students eligible for special education and other special populations will be treated 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 mode of instruction outlined in the Re-Entry Plan, individualized and alternative means of re-entry based upon student need, present levels of functioning, developmental levels, and student/parent input will be facilitated. |

English Language Learners

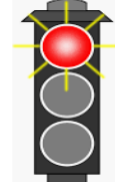
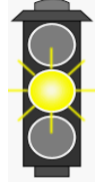
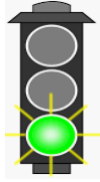
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| 19. | In accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidelines, during school closures due to COVID-19, English Learners will continue to receive their supplemental EL instructional program in addition to their general education program 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 will continue. |
| 20. | In accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidelines, communication with parents and guardians that have limited proficiency in English will be provided as needed 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, if needed. |
| 21. | In accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidelines, ELs who are also identified as students with disabilities will receive support for their EL needs, as well as support for their disabilities. During COVID-19, these dually identified students will continue to receive these supports. |



Newtown Public Schools Modes of Learning:

Newtown Public Schools is committed to preparing for full on-site learning for all students in the Fall. However, if community transmission of COVID-19 increases, Newtown Schools are prepared to provide remote blended learning opportunities in a Hybrid Learning Model, with 50% of students experiencing either onsite or distance learning on an alternating basis, or Full Distance Learning model with all students receiving instruction and support in a virtual online environment. Decisions on which learning mode to implement will be informed by forthcoming guidance from the Connecticut Department of Public Health in consultation with local health officials. The decision to shift to the Hybrid or Full Distance Learning Models will be significantly impacted by the level of community transmission of COVID-19 at any given time. Please see the graphic below outlining the various levels of COVID-19 transmission and the corresponding shift in learning models.

Levels of COVID-19 Community Transmission



Little to No Community Transmission - Minimal Spread of the Virus/No Spread of the Virus

Minimal or Moderate Community Transmission - Moderate Spread of the Virus

Substantial Community Transmission - High Spread of the Virus



Corresponding Shifts in Learning Modes



On-Site Learning

Hybrid Learning*

Full Distance Learning*

Fall 2020 Reopening - Plan for most students to return to school for on-site learning, while distance learning is provided to students who opt to stay home from the onset.

Plan for a 50% reduction in student attendance in school. Students attend school for on-site learning on an alternating basis. Students grouped into A and B cohorts.

Plan for no student attendance in schools with 100% of instruction and support being provided to students at home online through distance learning.

Students in the cohort off-site will receive instruction through distance learning.

Implemented to start the school year assuming the sustainment of the current low levels of COVID-19 transmissions.

Implemented after the start of the school year in response to a moderate increase in COVID-19 community transmissions.

Implemented after the start of the school year in response to a substantial increase in COVID-19 community transmissions.

Teaching staff delivers instruction onsite in classrooms.

Teaching staff delivers instruction onsite in classrooms to 50% of their students, either Cohort A or Cohort B on an alternating schedule.

Teaching staff delivers instruction via distance learning to all students.

<p>Provisions will be made for students who temporarily opt to stay at home to start the school year.</p> <p>Those students opting to learn at home will participate primarily in synchronous instruction, blended with asynchronous instruction, via Google Meet with their teacher, whenever possible.</p> <p>Alternative work plans will be developed for teachers who are unable to be on-site that may include co-teaching with a substitute teacher, providing support to other teachers or providing support to other students.</p> <p>In some cases, it may be necessary to designate a “distance learning teacher” to provide primary instruction to at-home students of a particular grade or subject area.</p>	<p>Grouping for Cohorts will be made with family consideration as a priority.</p> <p>Those students opting to learn at home, as well as the Cohort A or B students when learning from home, will participate primarily in synchronous instruction, blended with asynchronous instruction, via Google Meet with their teacher, whenever possible.</p> <p>If students have been designated a “distance learning teacher”, they would continue with that same teacher in the hybrid model, whenever possible.</p>	<p>“Wellness Wednesday” protocol is instituted for teacher professional development, collaboration, and online preparation.</p> <p>All students will be at home and will participate primarily in synchronous instruction, blended with asynchronous instruction, via Google Meet with their teacher, or designated “distance learning teacher” whenever possible.</p>
<p>Students primarily will use hard copy texts and instructional materials supplemented with online programming.</p> <p>Teachers will identify material to be taken home in the event of a shift to Hybrid Learning or Distance Learning.</p>	<p>Students will use a balanced combination of hard copy texts and online programming.</p> <p>Students in grades 3-12 will take mobile devices back and forth to schools when their cohort is onsite. Students in grades K-2 leave mobile devices at home. Hard copy texts and instructional materials are updated for home use throughout the Hybrid Learning period.</p>	<p>Students primarily use online programming supplemented with hard copy texts and instructional materials.</p> <p>Students in grades K-12 will use mobile devices at home. Hard copy texts and instructional materials remain home with the students.</p>

*Feedback from families, students, teachers, and leaders on experience with remote learning was collected via surveys in June and July 2020. Priority areas and commonalities in the survey results were identified by the Instruction and Technology Re-Entry Subcommittee and incorporated into the Hybrid Learning and Full Distance Learning Modes.



Pillar IV: Social/Emotional Learning



The focus of the Social/Emotional Learning (SEL) Pillar is to create a plan to best support the social/emotional needs of all students, parents, and staff as we transition back to school. Newtown Public Schools will maintain a climate that is highly supportive, and which focuses on optimism, hope, wellness and emotional support for students, families, and staff during the initial re-entry and throughout the school year. School teams will identify and provide support to students, staff and families that need focused support upon re-entry and beyond. Each student will be part of a nurturing and supportive classroom environment that provides information and opportunities that allow students to collectively process their shared experience and partake in mindful activities to mitigate stressors.

School Re-engagement	
1.	Each school will ensure that all students are regularly engaged in existing SEL programs and practices: Newtown SEL Webpage
2.	Existing SRBI (Scientific Research Based Interventions) teams will collaborate with teachers to develop support plans for any student or family in need.
3.	Each school will communicate specific information and resources available to support families struggling with COVID-19 related issues: Family Resource List Trauma Warning Signs for Staff Trauma Warning Signs for Parents
4.	SRBI teams will proactively review data, including anecdotal data, in order to identify students in need of extra support due to COVID-19 related issues or school re-entry issues.
5.	Outreach plans will be developed by schools' teams in order to reconnect with students who were disengaged during the prior period of distance learning and for those who remain on distance learning and are at risk.
6.	Wellness and self-care opportunities will be provided by each school for staff: Article about helping staff heal upon re-entry Support Staff List
7.	Safe School Climate Committees will meet regularly to plan opportunities for students and staff which promote a culture of hope, wellness, and optimism.

8.	All students will engage in at least one developmentally appropriate lesson that addresses the pandemic and the return to school.
9.	SEL programs/practices/lessons that are implemented in classrooms will be adapted, as possible, for students learning from home
SEL Staff Training	
10.	Staff training will be provided through an online platform in order to provide guidance in identifying abuse and neglect in the context of the pandemic and in the distance learning model.



Pillar V: Facilities



The focus of the Facilities Pillar is to identify practices and resources to protect the health and safety of students and staff. The subcommittee worked to develop clear safety expectations including, but not limited to, safety devices, PPEs, cleaning and sanitizing, signs, and ventilation.

Classroom Health and Safety	
1.	Each school has removed furniture and nonessential materials from classrooms in order to maximize spacing. Proper storage for items removed from classrooms is provided by each school's custodial staff and the Director of Facilities.
2.	Each school has identified and removed shared use objects and/or materials.
3.	Each school will have an adequate supply of PPE, as well as individual barriers and plexiglass dividers in necessary locations. Hand sanitizer stations will be available at every school.
4.	All Department of Public Health guidelines for the operation of central and non-central ventilation systems will be implemented in each school and MERV 13 filters installed in all ventilation devices.
5.	Air purifiers have been ordered for each classroom in buildings without HVAC.
6.	Each school will identify cooling stations and allow access for classes in a building without HVAC. Fans will be provided to those buildings without HVAC as well to push warm air out of windows as recommended by the CDC. Each school is also investigating the acquisition of outdoor enclosures/tents to provide additional spaces with increased air flow.
7.	All Department of Public Health guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting schools for the maintenance of building water systems will be strictly followed.
8.	A custodial checklist detailing cleaning protocols will be available for every room. In addition, cleaning of eating areas, bathrooms and general daytime cleaning will follow a predetermined and set schedule. Cleaning logs will be posted outside of all bathrooms and cafeterias. Teachers will work with younger students to clean up areas after eating snacks or lunch in classrooms.

9.	Should the District move to the Hybrid Learning model, Wednesdays (“Wellness Wednesdays”) will be used to disinfect and deep clean all school buildings between cohorts.
10.	The Director of Facilities will create a custodial substitute list and/or investigate the use of a supplemental cleaning company.
11.	The Director of Facilities in coordination with each school’s custodial staff will utilize cleaning agents aligned with CDC guidelines.
12.	Spaces may be repurposed for instruction in each school, if necessary. Municipal or other community spaces may also be utilized.
Signage and Messaging	
13.	Through the use of school signage, reminders for hand washing and mask usage will occur throughout the school day.
14.	All school entrances will display a notice of requirement to wear masks before entering.
15.	All school bathrooms will display hand washing signs.
School and Campus Security	
16.	Under the supervision of the Director of Security, each school campus will continue to deploy and maintain armed and unarmed school security personnel during the school day.
17.	The Director of Security will facilitate fire drills and other emergency response drills at each school as appropriate, under guidance provided by the Newtown Director of Health, Newtown Fire Marshal, and the State of Connecticut DESPP/DEMHS Region 5 Coordinator.




Pillar VI: School Operations



The focus of the School Operations Pillar is to create a logistic plan that supports a safe, organized transition back to school. This includes planning for building usage, outdoor spaces, athletics, and transportation.





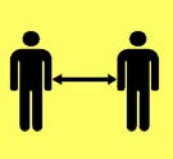



Building Usage	
1.	School clubs and activities that take place before or after school will follow all requirements outlined in this document as applicable, including but not limited to the use of face coverings and maximizing physical distancing.
2.	After-school care through EdAdvance will resume and will follow all requirements outlined in this document as applicable, including but not limited to the use of face coverings and maximizing physical distancing.
3.	Town organizations that provide clubs and activities to Newtown students will be allowed if the activity has been approved by the Newtown Health Director and the organization/activity adheres to all requirements outlined in this document, as applicable, including but not limited to the use of face coverings and maximizing physical distancing.
4.	Use of schools by outside organizations will be informed by the current state of health conditions in the community and will be at the discretion of the Superintendent.
5.	Visitors, including parents, will not be allowed in school. Parents will drop off materials in the vestibule.
6.	All parent meetings, including parent conferences, 504 meetings and PPTs will be held virtually.
State and Federal Lunch Programs & Policies	
7.	Schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack Program, and Special Milk Program (SMP), as applicable, will continue to determine eligibility for and make available free and reduced-price meals and snacks and free milk to all eligible students.

8.	Schools will comply with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) regulations and policies for school meals and milk including the meal pattern requirements.
9.	Schools that participate in the NSLP are required to claim meals/milk provided to eligible students using accurate counting and claiming methods.
Cafeteria Spaces, Lunches and Snacks	
10.	Building principals will create lunch plans that minimize crowding and maximize social distancing. Individual plastic barriers will be used when students are eating.
11.	Students will be allowed to bring their lunch/snack and drink from home or may purchase a bagged lunch at school.
12.	Students are encouraged to bring personal water bottles.
Athletics	
13.	CIAC recommendations and updates will inform all decisions regarding participation in all activities related to competitive athletics. Specific direction will be communicated by individual schools.
Recess and Play	
14.	Building principals will create recess plans that maintain cohorts and outline specific activities in which students may engage.
15.	Staff will actively monitor play, recess, and provide alternative activities when necessary.
Transportation and Buses	
16.	When feasible, families are encouraged to provide alternate transportation to buses.
17.	Bus seating will be assigned with family members grouped together and students will be required to stay in the assigned seat at all times.
18.	Bus drivers, as well as students, will be required to wear a face covering or mask at all times when riding the bus (one will be provided, if needed).



19.	Buses will run at full capacity under Low Risk conditions and 50% capacity under Moderate conditions, with maximum allowable spacing between students.
20.	K-6 bus monitors will ride buses for the first two weeks of school to ensure student compliance with safety and health protocols.
21.	When feasible, bus windows will remain open.
22.	Building principals will create plans for arrival and dismissal, including embarking and disembarking of buses and parent drop-off and pick-up that minimize crowding.
23.	Students will be expected to ride the same bus to school in the morning and the same bus to home in the afternoon every day.

Student and Family Responsibilities

	<p>Screening for Symptoms at Home: In order to prevent transmission among the school population, parents are instructed to conduct daily health assessments prior to leaving for school in order to identify fever and other possible COVID-19 symptoms. Anyone with a fever of 100 degrees (F) or higher will be excluded from school.</p>
	<p>Stay at Home if Feeling Ill: Students must stay home if they are feeling ill and have symptoms consistent with COVID-19. If there are questions about your child's well-being on a given day, please do not allow him or her to come to school and contact your physician for guidance immediately.</p>
	<p>Face Covering/Masks: All students must wear face coverings or masks that completely cover the nose and mouth while on buses and inside the school buildings with exceptions only for those for whom it is not safe to do so due to medical conditions or disability. "Mask Breaks" will be provided during the day. Students are encouraged to wear their own face covering or mask and schools will maintain a supply to provide one, if needed. Masks with a filtered valve will be prohibited.</p>
	<p>Water Bottles: Students are encouraged to bring their own personal water bottles.</p>
	<p>Social Distancing: Students must maintain social distancing to the greatest extent possible. Students are expected to practice social distancing when entering and exiting the building, in classrooms, and moving throughout the school.</p>
	<p>Frequent Hand Washing and Hand Sanitizing: Students must engage in frequent hand washing or sanitizing upon arrival, before and after meals, after bathroom use, and after coughing or sneezing.</p>
	<p>Student May Not Change Buses: Students will be expected to ride the same bus to school in the morning and the same bus to home in the afternoon every day. Face coverings or masks should be in place prior to entering the bus.</p>
	<p>Transportation: When feasible, families are encouraged to provide alternate transportation to buses.</p>

Keeping our schools open...is everyone's responsibility!

Thank you for your support!

Resources

Please see the links below for additional information regarding the State Department of Education's Plan for Reopening Schools, COVID-19 health and safety resources, as well as resources related to social and emotional health.

CSDE Resources:

[Adapt, Advance Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together](#)

Health and Resources:

[Connecticut COVID-19 Response](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website.](#)

[American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

Social and Emotional Learning Resources:

[Newtown SEL Webpage](#)

[Family Resource List](#)

Disclaimer

The guidance and plans provided in this document are based on current guidelines and requirements issued by the State Department of Education and the current input of local entities and public health officials. The COVID-19 public health emergency continues to be a rapidly evolving situation, and consequently, the guidelines, requirements and plans described herein may change as the legal and regulatory landscape and the public health trends continue to change.