

## **Reopening of Schools for 2020-21 FAQ**

**(from questions asked at & received before or after)**

On August 4th the Reopening Plan for 2020-21 was shared and public comments and questions were asked. During those meetings the administrative staff committed to answering all questions posed by board and community members; and committed to providing the answers in one FAQ document accessible by the public. In keeping with the commitment of the boards and the current administrative team to provide effective communication and transparency, this FAQ is being made available on the website.

### **Questions asked or received via e-mail**

**1.) Q: Can you speak to the air filtration system? Will the air coolant systems be turned on at the beginning of school?**

**A:** At all sites we will be following the State of Connecticut Guidance on Ventilation Systems. Included in this guidance, all ventilation systems will be operated at full capacity for one week prior to reopening. Additionally, each buildings' air system will be flushed for 2 hours prior to and one hour after occupancy daily, bathroom exhaust systems will run 24/7 and ventilation systems will run at all times during occupancy.

**2.) Q: Will you be cleaning the desks between classes?**

**A:** Desks will be cleaned daily as part of the school cleaning protocols, and weekly per our deep cleaning protocols. Additionally, classrooms will be provided with adequate sanitizer to clean desks as needed throughout the day, including after lunchtime.

3.) **Q: What will the response be if there is a Covid positive case in the school system?**

**A:** In the event of a confirmed case in one of our schools the following steps will be taken:

- **Assess** the risk with local health officials.
- **Communicate** with parents/guardians, school community, local/state officials
- **Plan** for a short-term closure to allow for deep cleaning of facility and contact tracing per CDC guidelines
- **Consult** with local health officials regarding appropriate action steps (including decision making about a longer duration closure at the site or district-wide)

4.) **Q: Will additional chrome books be available if we go to remote learning again?**

**A:** Currently we have a 1:1 ratio of devices to students. All students are currently equipped with a device for learning. Incoming Kindergarten students will be provided with devices upon starting the school year.

5.) **Q: Will siblings be cohorted together whenever possible; ie, twins?**

**A:** Siblings will be cohorted for transportation purposes, and be assigned to the same bus on the same school day(s) during hybrid mode. Grade level siblings will be cohorted whenever possible in the classroom.

6.) **Q: Will band and chorus classes be held in the fall?**

**A:** Yes. Building principals are working with their music departments to determine the best instructional approach

7.) **Q: Will school libraries be open or closed?**

**A:** Until further notice our school libraries will remain closed during the school day.

**8.) Q: Why are teachers providing their own PPE?**

**A:** All staff and students will be allowed to wear their own PPE that complies with CDC, to ensure comfort and effectiveness. The district has acquired an inventory of PPE to ensure that everyone (staff and students) have access to PPE during the school day and will provide PPE to both staff and students as needed.

**9.) Q: Will the high school consider using an ab block schedule like at the middle school? How do you plan on addressing continuity issues with the return to the 4x4 block at Valley?**

**A:** The high school will utilize a scheduling model that will best support the program of studies, while adhering to the public health guidance regarding social distancing. Due to the differences between JW and VRHS, as well as the complexities of scheduling, including numbers of courses offered, staffing levels, and student enrollment, utilizing the same schedule at both buildings is impractical.

Any schedule employed this year due to COVID, will be a temporary measure to respond to the public health/building management considerations that are unique due to the circumstance. Staff members will work closely with students and families to ensure continuity during the year, especially, if there is need to change the model of schooling (i.e. distance, hybrid, full-in-person)

**10.) Q: How is Region 4 going to ensure that kids and staff who that have traveled right before school begins doesn't come in infected?**

**A:** We have asked that all of our families support their students and our communities by proactively informing their school's main office(es) about any travel, and adhere to CDC and State of Connecticut law. Additionally, families have been asked to participate in self screening protocols prior to sending their child to school every morning.

**11.) Q: Is there a plan to also contain siblings of any child who shows symptoms?**

**A:** Students and staff exhibiting COVID symptoms during the school day, will be temporarily isolated from the general

population in our containment rooms, until a parents or guardian can arrive.

**12.) Q: What will be the protocol if someone gets the virus and will we have the opportunity to distance learn at our discretion?**

**A:** In the event a student must self-quarantine at the direction of a medical professional or legal authority that student will participate in distance learning, until they are able to return.

Families have the option to access distance learning for their child at any point in the school year for as long as they deem necessary or appropriate. We ask that if a student is changing their status (at home, in school) that parents notify the main office with adequate notice so that schools may plan accordingly.

**13.) Q: With all the measures that will be put in place how will they be enforced (i.e. for younger kids) will there be extra staff to help monitor social distancing, mask wearing, etc?**

**A:** All staff and students will be trained in the new protocols as part of the back to school orientation, scheduled to occur the first week of school. At this time, we are adequately staffed to provide students with the supervision and support they will need to meet school expectations.

**14.) Q: If there is a hybrid option, will the parents be able to choose which days their children will be in school vs out?**

**A:** No. Students will be cohorted based on bus route and stop.

**15.) Q: Will teachers & classrooms possibly have microphones and/or speakers added into the classrooms?**

**A:** We are assessing the technology needs of our instructional model. All teachers are currently equipped with devices that have audio/visual capabilities.

**16.) Q: In the hybrid, how are they adjusting for all the Monday holidays?**

**A:** No students will be required to engage in learning on holidays. All students will be required to participate in learning daily on school days. Depending on the scenario, this may occur in person, remote or in hybrid mode.

**17.) Q: Will there be signage, language in the handbooks, or liability waivers for parents and employees to sign as a condition of employment or schooling?**

**A:** Staff, students and parents will be advised of all school expectations in the following ways: staff development/ student training, hand book addendums specific to COVID-19, routine notices sent home from school offices, daily reminders and hallway signage at the building level.

**18.) Q: Are fall sports at John Winthrop going to happen?**

**A:** No. Athletics programs are currently under review by state and local authorities at this time. As conditions may change, we will revisit sports , clubs and activities when it is safe to do so.

**19.) Q: Re: E-learning Are the students expected to stay logged onto the computer for live teaching or will it be google classroom? Does each teacher decide how they will go about the distance learning of the hybrid model? Is it possible to homeschool or teach the school curriculum in our own fashion during the days at home?**

**A:** Parents who choose to homeschool their children must formally withdraw their child/children from the assigned school and submit a letter to the assistant superintendent of schools indicating the family's intent to homeschool. Parents who choose this option are responsible for all aspects of their child's/children's education, including curriculum, instruction, assessments, and grades.

All teachers will use Google Classroom for all three learning models for the 2020-2021. Best practices for distance learning and hybrid will be a focus of professional development throughout the year.

**20.) Q: Will the children sanitize before entering the building and will they have their temperature taken?**

**A:** All individuals entering our school building will have access to hand sanitizer. At this time, the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health is not advising or mandating temporal scans.

**21.) Q: When a plan is constructed could we get a virtual tour of how a day will look to a child in elementary, junior high and high school student?**

**A:** Building principals will be in communication with their communities about the daily schedule. Additionally, the central office and school administrators will be presenting to the public about the family school routines prior to the opening of school.

**22.) Q: How are children whose families chose only distance learning being accommodated within their classroom community?**

**A:** Students who participate in only distance learning will have the opportunity to connect remotely with their teacher and classmates. Depending on the model of school (hybrid, full) this may look differently depending on the grade level and subject area. Teachers will work to form positive connection with each of their students regardless of how individual student access school this year.

**23.) Q: Can you please walk through the financial ramifications to the district if an unprecedented number of kids withdraw to homeschool?**

**A:** Students who live in the tri-town area, but are homeschooled, are not enrolled in our schools. Any family choosing to disenroll their student(s) may do so, however there is no negative financial impact to the system in these instances.

Students who are participating in distance learning this year, are still enrolled in our school.

**24.) Q: Have any measures been taken to prepare outdoor classroom space at CES?**

**A:** Outdoor spaces at each school site have been assessed to ensure social distancing during the school year..

**25.) Q: The plan says: “all instructional delivery will continue to be accessed via the Google Classroom during in-person, hybrid and remote, e-learning.” Does this mean chromebooks and google classroom will be a larger component this year for in-person learning?**

**A:** Regardless of the model (distance, hybrid, full-in-person) technology such as chromebooks, ipads and our Google platform will be integral components of teaching and learning,

**26.) Q: What will the ratio be of synchronous vs. asynchronous?**

**A:** As part of daily instruction, teachers will utilize both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities for students.

**27.) Q: The plan says that “all teachers will be required to engage with students as a whole class in direct, synchronous instruction via Google Meet for the start of each class, every day”. Will this be an informal check-in conversation? Or will teachers deliver instruction during this time?**

**A:** Teachers will individually determine daily, the most effective instructional delivery, based on student/class need, the subject matter and the type of planned learning activity.

**28.) Q: How will differentiation occur? How will kids receive remediation and enrichment if school becomes remote again?**

**A:** Teachers and staff will collaborate to determine and meet individual student learning needs. This will occur, in person and remotely as appropriate and necessary.

**29.) Q: What will the remote learning days look like? Will they be filled with live teacher instruction/interaction with students?**

**A:** On remote learning days, students will have opportunities to participate in synchronous and asynchronous learning.

**30.) Q: How are schools going to welcome and integrate full remote learners on the first day of school?**

**A:** All students will participate in the first day of school activities either remotely or in person.

**31.) Q: Are kids logging in all day? Are they going to have their actual assigned classroom teacher? Will it be “live” classroom so kids can be part of their school day classroom as well?**

**A:** See Question 26.

**32.) Q: Is the district planning for elementary school kids to also have access to physical books?**

**A:** Yes.

**33.) Q: What will e-learning look like? Are my 5&7 year olds expected to sit in front of a digital classroom for several hours? Or will it be as our teachers did in the spring where assignments were given at the beginning of the day and completed throughout the day, with occasional google meets?**

**A:** As we develop our approach for teaching and learning this year, we will employ the feedback we received from various stakeholders about our efforts with e-learning in the spring. Unlike the spring we have a chance to develop an approach by design. As such, students participating remotely will have opportunities to interact with classmates and teachers on a routine basis. Teachers will be engaging in an instructional approach that is based on synchronous and asynchronous learning tasks.

**34.) Q: Are supportive services expected to occur in the main classroom, or will children be able to go to other classrooms as necessary (example: my daughter receives specialized reading instruction and it would negatively impact her self esteem to have that instruction in an area where her peers could witness)?**

**A:** Special Education services will be offered in special education classrooms for individual and small group instruction.



**35.) Q: You indicated there was a plan for mask breaks, lunch and gym. What are those plans?**

**A:** Principals will be communicating the specifics of mask break planning to each school community.

**36.) Q: Could you address the modifications that are being made to the music programs (chorus and band, specifically) at all levels?**

**A:** We are currently awaiting guidance from Connecticut State Department of Education regarding music programs. At this time, we are planning to have students observe social distancing guidelines in the classroom as well as the requirement of wearing a mask. During the school day, students will engage in general music study and practice performance at home.

**37.) Q: Could you discuss in more detail the professional development that teachers will be participating in to become more adept at remote instruction?**

**A:** Teachers will participate in professional development in blended learning best practices, advanced features of Google Classroom and Google Suite Applications, as well as technology integration tools (FlipGrid, ScreenCastify, and JamBoard).

**38.) Q: My understanding of the hybrid model you presented is that on any given day (M/T/Th/F), the students who are not in school in person will be "piped in" (for lack of a better term) to participate synchronously in class meetings along with the other students who are physically in school. Is my understanding of this correct?**

**A:** Yes, students who are scheduled to participate in remote, e-learning will have both synchronous and asynchronous opportunities.

**39.) Q: Is the District going to have guidelines or policies about masks?**

**A:** Yes. The district will have consistent expectations regarding mask use in all buildings.

**40.) Q:** Is there going to be an alternative method of learning offered such as paper handouts or packets that can be facilitated remotely by cg's and parents to fulfill this role ? It is often hard for young children particularly those with special needs to maintain attention on a screen. My question is will there be a plan B for a young child that are unable to maintain adequate attention via a screen and may miss the vast majority of the real time lesson?

**A:** Remote, e-learning instruction will be provided via Google Classroom and will include both synchronous and asynchronous learning. Students will be expected to participate in this platform for part of each class.

**41.) Q:** The threshold to consider hybrid day school is 10-25 cases per 100,000 on a 7 day average.

**What source will you be using to re-evaluate during the year?**

**A:** During the year, we will use the metrics offered by the State Of Connecticut to assess infection rate, in close collaboration with our local health authorities to determine which model of schooling we need to employ.