

Good afternoon

We received very good, general information from the “return to school” survey that was sent previously. Many of you were able to complete it, which was very helpful in our overall planning. We will have an online form that will be shared in the next week so that we can gather specific information about which students are choosing to temporarily remain at home in the fall. It will be critical for all of our families to complete that form so we can accurately plan for our busing, all health-related protocols and our instruction. The form will be sent out through the Parent Portal so if you do not have access to the Portal please email Freddie Rodriguez at [frodriguez@ewct.org](mailto:frodriguez@ewct.org).

### **PROPOSED CHANGE IN FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL**

Significant training for our staff is required prior to the start of school. Due to the substantial amount of preparation we will need to provide once school year staff return, school districts have been granted a waiver to provide 177 student days of school rather than the typically required 180 days.

I will be recommending that the Board of Education vote to change the first day of school for students in grades 1 – 12 to September 3 and the first day for students in grades PK and K to September 10. This has not been voted at this time but I wanted to make sure families were able to plan in anticipation of the calendar change being discussed.

### **RE-OPENING PLAN**

I have submitted our re-opening plan to the Connecticut State Department of Education, as required. The plan will be on our website for you to review. I have written it as a draft as guidance continues to change, sometimes daily and many of the protocols are still being written. Some of the information in the draft plan will likely change as we move through the next few weeks and I will update the plan on the website if that occurs.

A recording of the BOE meeting from July 20 is on the district website under Board of Education, Agendas and Minutes. There was a lengthy discussion regarding the re-entry plan which you may find helpful.

Our subcommittees are continuing to write the protocols I reference as in process in the re-entry plan. As you may recall, every district is required to create three plans: full attendance, a hybrid plan to reduce the number of students in the buildings and a full remote plan. The full attendance and hybrid models involve many factors and each format creates its own unique challenges.

To this point we have made plans including:

- The purchase of masks for those students who have masks that get dirty or break during the day; although all students will be required to wear a mask on the bus and to school
- Installation of touchless faucets and paper towel holders in rest rooms
- Purchase of hand sanitizer for classrooms, offices and all other occupied spaces in all buildings
- Allowing students to eat lunch outside of their classrooms. We are able to either vary lunch waves or use multiple spaces in the buildings to ensure students are at least 6ft apart for meals, when they will have their masks off.
- Videos which will be placed on line regarding how to put on and take off masks the proper way to minimize the spread of germs
- Circles for all classrooms designed to help students express their feelings about returning to school, the school closure and dealing with losses due to the pandemic. We recognize that many of our students have been and will continue to struggle with the emotions related to this situation.
- Our health protocols are almost complete and are being reviewed by the health district.

There are many more elements to the plan coming together and more information will be shared again next Friday.

### **OPTING OUT OF IN SCHOOL INSTRUCTION**

For those families who are considering whether to have students remain at home in the fall, please be aware that this is considered a temporary situation based on the pandemic and guidance by the state about flexibilities with in- person instruction. We will continue to provide information to families about this option but the state can, at some point, change their guidance about temporarily opting out of in-school instruction. We are in the end stages of planning what this opt out instructional model will look like and that information will be provided to families as soon as possible. The CSDE provided updated guidance to districts today and we will take that into consideration as we finalized plans.

Students who begin the year at home but later wish to return to in-school learning may do so but please know there will be a delay of up to a few days before they re-enter the buildings so we may appropriate plan and schedule your child.

### **FACE COVERINGS**

A reminder that all students are required to wear face coverings on the bus and in school. An appropriate face covering is one made out of a material without holes and covers both the mouth and nose and fits under the chin. Washable, cloth masks are appropriate as are the disposable masks if you chose to send your child with those. Families are expected to follow the dress code regarding inappropriate pictures/sayings

on masks, such as those that may contain profanity or references to drugs or other illegal activities. Bandanas that are only secured around a child's face but open at the bottom do not meet the requirements of a face covering.

A medical note will be required if your child cannot wear a face covering. Once we receive that documentation, a parent meeting will be scheduled to discuss your child's individual health-related needs.

If you have any questions about face coverings please contact the nurse in your child's school or our district health coordinator Wendy Gage at [wgage@ewct.org](mailto:wgage@ewct.org).

## **UPDATED CONTACT INFORMATION AND EMERGENCY CONTACTS**

!! One critical item as we plan to re-enter school, is for all families to ensure their contact information and address are correct. We need accurate information to plan for transportation and to ensure we can reach you in case of illness or updates about school. If you have moved or changed your phone number it is critical that you contact your child's school as soon as possible. !!

It is equally important for all families to have reliable emergency contacts who can pick up your child within 30 minutes if they become ill at school. Our protocols for supporting staff and students who show signs of illness are based on CDC, Connecticut Department of Education and health district guidelines.

If you have questions or comments, please continue to share those with me or your child's building administrator. We want to hear from you so we can consider your ideas or concerns as we plan.

Thank you so much

Christine

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