

Frequently Asked Questions

December 29, 2020

Is it possible to return the "high needs" students already identified to attend 4 days/week to in person schooling before January 19th?

On November 16, 2020, the decision to close schools until January 19, 2021 was supported by many district stakeholders, as evidenced by this excerpt from the Superintendent's letter to the community. *"After much continued consultation with our district doctor, the Chief of Pediatrics from Griffin Hospital, our Head Nurse, our Emergency Management Director, the Director of the Naugatuck Valley Health District, the Board Chair, The Board Vice Chair, and the First Selectwoman we have made the extremely difficult decision to extend the cancellation of in-person hybrid classes for all students and staff and to stay on remote learning until January 19, 2021."*

The Leadership Team carefully considered the charge of the Board of Education to phase in groups of students for more in-person learning, beginning with a high needs population. In order for that to be thoroughly addressed and successful, we need time to prepare. Elements that factor into **the identified return date of January 19, 2021** include and are not limited to:

- prioritizing clear and frequent communication with families, from initial district communication to all families, to selected high needs families, to securing feedback of all participants in phase 1, conducting follow-up phone calls as needed with families to finalize participants and placements
- preparation of facilities (desks and identifying additional snack/mask break areas, etc)
- redesigning of transportation routes
- reviewing and ensuring that the proper mitigation measures and protocol procedures are safely in place
- restructuring schedules of any temporary full DL students at middle and high school
- consideration of multiple key staff on vacation **from 12/23/2020- January 4, 2021**

Are there any changes to either mitigation strategies/quarantine practices based on learning from experiences in the fall?

Our identified mitigation strategies have worked well. Additional strategies to consider as populations increase include:

- Wearing masks during PE
- Additional lunch/snack spaces for students
- Teachers eating in teachers' lounge not the best option, encourage staff to eat spread out in cafeteria
- Additional students on buses will require seating charts and sitting siblings together

What are the solutions for the lunch/snack and arrival/dismissal being considered by the team?

The Middle and High School will utilize cafeteria, front lobby hallway, media center, gymnasium to maximize social distancing during lunch waves.

The Elementary buildings will consider eating snacks in waves so not everyone has their mask off at the same time. Paraprofessionals will continue to deliver food to the classrooms. Students will continue to have lunch/snacks in the classroom and we may need to assign 5-6 students from each classroom to sit at a separate table in the cafeteria. The tables/seats will be marked by grade level and classroom. We currently have four monitors that cover classrooms during lunch times. Additional staff may be needed to assist with supervising the cafeteria. Currently staff have access to the cafe for their lunch, staff will have to have lunch in the staff lounge and/or classrooms where students are not present throughout the building during their lunch times.

Also considerations for elementary silent snack/lunch/breakfast – students can watch a book read aloud, **read independently**, or draw while eating snack, lunch, or breakfast if we have all remain in the same classroom while eating. We will also explore having 50% go to cafeteria for some waves where class sizes will be pushing 15 – 20. When class is occurring and some are eating, those students are silent listeners until their masks are placed back on after finishing their snack/meal.

Arrival and Dismissal procedures would remain the same at CLS. The cohorts' arrival and dismissal are separated by grade and currently and we can continue to do so. BES may need to slightly stagger (just a few minutes) to manage arrival of buses and family drop off.

Is there a plan to redeploy/reassign staff based family choice for remote/in person learning?

Creative staffing is already a practice in our schools. When a teacher is out for quarantining, we may need to ask a different staff to cover the class as a monitor, if the teacher is feeling well enough to teach from home. (this is not always the case, however.)

Students electing to change from in-person to temporary full remote learning from January on will now follow the high school model of staying with current teachers and will not be assigned a **temporary full-remote teacher**. (We anticipate many families will select this option due to the high numbers of coronavirus cases currently.)

Students currently assigned to a temporary full remote teacher at the K-8 level may return to a classroom teacher assigned for in-person instruction if and when they opt to return to in-person learning full time. If the temporary full distance learning teacher becomes available, due to his/her class having fully returned to in-person learning, that teacher is contracted for the year and will then step into in-person instructional support in a variety of ways.

RE: the reporting table for the website: Is it cumulative or only reflecting new cases? How to account for students/staff emerging from quarantine or isolation and returning to school?

This chart was provided as one example of a possible form of communication. The top layer of ‘total’ cases would be historical from the beginning of school to current date. The data from Thanksgiving until we return to school may not be accurate as families are not reporting cases to us with fidelity. The District Nurse would manage the daily data of current cases and quarantines. This is a great deal of work, and is only an option for the Board to consider. Additionally, we are open to different structures of this table.

How are multi-site and Central Office staff reflected in reporting?

Multi-site staff are always assigned a home building for a variety of reporting purposes. Central Office staff are such a small number (under ten) that it may bridge confidentiality to report at that level on a chart for the district. All cases are reported to the state through NVHD and our head nurse.

Are there any updates from the NVL and/or CIAC regarding winter sports?

Provided from Seymour’s Athletic Director: “All winter sports are currently on pause, through **January 19, 2021**. If COVID metrics allow, an abbreviated winter season will begin shortly after **January 19, 2021**. The CIAC remains optimistic that there will be an “alternate” football season, which would take place between the abbreviated winter season and the eventual spring season. More information will be provided to athletic directors after **January 4, 2021**. As information becomes available, athletic administration provide communication to the school community and Board of Education”

Regarding contact tracing, will we be following the “within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more” (cumulative 15 minutes) rule?

Yes, this is our contract tracing protocol and thus relies heavily on accurate seating charts whenever possible.

How many kids will be in my child’s classroom?

There is no one specific way to answer this question, as parents have not had the opportunity yet to share with us their intentions, and individual choices have changed, and continue to change, on almost a daily basis. The extension phases will gradually increase numbers of students learning in-person. When the second phase is implemented, there is the possibility that elementary classrooms could potentially be at full capacity, if all elementary students, including those who selected temporary full remote learning, returned. We do not anticipate that this will be the case, however, it is possible.

Can we get an up-to-date refresher on the current, state travel restrictions?

The most current information regarding travel to and from Connecticut can be found at this link: <https://portal.ct.gov/coronavirus/travel#:~:text=The%20Connecticut%20Travel%20Advisory%20requires,or%20the%20Affected%20Country.>

How will the schools remain safe with increased populations?

Moving forward when we reopen in January, Seymour **will continue to** make every effort to remain open, at a minimum, in some fashion of a hybrid, in-person learning model. This will be accomplished in part by properly implementing overlapping mitigation strategies, quarantining individuals, rooms, and buildings as necessary. Cohorting, masks, handwashing, social distancing to the extent possible, proper ventilation, maximizing outdoor opportunities, enhanced cleaning, home screenings prior to attending school, staying home when not feeling well, and staying home if family members are potentially ill are all mitigation strategies that contribute to more successful in-person learning. The district's last resort will be to consider moving entire schools and/or the entire district to full remote learning. It must be clearly understood by everyone that student and staff safety **has and will remain to be** the utmost priority for all decisions made, and moving toward increased and full capacity of schools is a rigorous goal that needs to be responded to in a fluid and flexible manner. Everyone plays an important role in making this commitment possible.

What about the buses?

The phasing in of in-person learning will increase bus capacity, depending on which students elect to return to school. Families **will be surveyed between January 4-8** regarding their intent on using the bus. Bus routes may need to be altered and adjusted to accommodate adequate spacing of students and this may occur more than once. Bus drivers will create and maintain seating charts for contact tracing purposes.

Where can I find the average daily rate of COVID-19 cases among persons living in our community?

Here is the direct link to see these numbers as well as numbers throughout the state:

<https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Data-Tracker>. Please realize that these numbers are updated every Thursday.

What if I have questions?

As always, please call or email your building administrator for specific questions and concern

