

PRESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Superintendent's Update

Dear Parents, Caregivers, and Community Members,

I hope this message finds you well. As you know, on July 24, 2020, the district submitted its three-tiered plan for reopening schools. The emphasis, at that time, was on full in-person schooling, starting August 31, 2020. On Monday, July 27, 2020, the rules changed. The Governor and the Commissioner of Education charged Connecticut's superintendents with the decision to reopen. Subsequent to that announcement, I have remained in contact with many area superintendents, staff, and local leaders, including our regional health director. LEARN superintendents who represent 25 area towns have agreed to, as much as feasible, move in unison and chose a coordinated reopen model. The overall and robust consensus with which I agree is to open in a hybrid model similar to the one described in our June 24 district plan.

NFA and other larger communities, such as New London and Norwich, have already announced that they are opening with a hybrid model. Locally, North Stonington, Griswold, Montville, and Lisbon are all moving to the hybrid, as well. There are two basic models for a hybrid opening: a full and indefinite hybrid opening and a hybrid opening with a one-month review process. I am choosing the hybrid opening with a one-month review. One thing we have learned over these last few months is that change is almost guaranteed, as we learn more about the virus and its science. Selecting the hybrid model indicates a commitment to continuous reflection and that changes may occur.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Student Group A In school In person	Student Group A In school In person	All Students Virtual Learning Deep Cleansing of School Buildings	Student Group A Virtual Learning Student Group B In school In person	Student Group A Virtual Learning Student Group B In school In person

The hybrid model allows us to achieve healthy social distancing, improved contact tracing capacity, and most importantly, reestablish the crucial trusted relationship between teachers and students. This relationship is necessary to implement any quality instructional program whether in-person or virtual.

There is an extensive amount of details related to the hybrid model - much of which we have answers, some of which we need to work through. The primary weekly calendar is Monday-Tuesday, half the students will be in school; Wednesday will be a full virtual day and deep cleaning, and then Thursday-Friday, the other half of the students will be in school. The groups will be divided strategically, allowing for considerations of blended families, siblings, and special education students. Your building principals and staff are developing lists now.

Some of the additional conditions to consider (this is not an all-inclusive list):

- Our plan has been reviewed by our local Department of Health authority.
- Classrooms and buildings are being reconfigured.
- Enhanced cleaning procedures are in place.
- Families and caregivers are asked to conduct a home health assessment each day before school begins.
- Anyone with symptoms are expected to stay home.
- The first days of school will be early release days.
- Pre-K and Kindergarten students will attend all four days (M, T, Th, F). Many community-based childcare programs have continued to serve children safely through the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- Students and teachers will be encouraged to go outside, but playscapes will not be used.
- Students will not be able to arrive early to school.
- Visitors may come to school by appointment only.
- Before school and after school activities are cancelled until further notice.
- Face coverings (masks) must be worn.
- Frequent hand washing must continue.
- Social distancing strategies will be in place.

This message is issued as my weekly Thursday Update. The formal announcement will be shared at the Board of Education's Monday, August 10, 2020 meeting. Please join us at that meeting to gather additional details. After Monday night's meeting, there will be a follow up virtual parent meeting *tentatively* planned for

Wednesday, August 12, 2020 at 7 PM.

The overarching criteria for the decision to implement a hybrid model remains the safety and wellbeing of students and staff, as well as the reestablishment of the teacher student relationship.

If you have any thoughts or questions, please do not hesitate to share with your building principal or me via my email at seitsingerr@prestonschools.org.

In the meantime, be well. Thank you for your continued support.

Roy Seitsinger
Superintendent