

COVID-19 Preparedness

August 3, 2020

Dear Students, Parents and Friends,

This letter is meant to outline district plans for reopening Hartford Schools for the 2020-21 school year. The plans are designed to be flexible in an effort to address the uncertainty of the virus here in our region by providing hybrid in-person and remote options for families. All schools will begin the new school year in a hybrid model. Hybrid for elementary school students will mean the pairing of in-person instruction with remote instruction. Elementary student school day hours will be reduced to allow for half of the students to attend in the morning and the other half of the students to attend in the afternoon. This will allow for smaller class sizes, easier transportation to and from schools and proper cleaning between student groupings. There will also be a full remote option at the elementary level. The high school and middle school will offer a hybrid model or a fully remote option for all students. The Career and Technology Center hopes to begin with in-person instruction for all students due to the nature of their coursework and the small class sizes at the center. Parents will be asked to indicate their preferences for the model they prefer in a survey that will be sent later this week.

All schools have new procedures in place for combating the virus before students and staff enter the school bus or the school building. New state-of-the-art cleaning equipment has been purchased and will be used on school buses as well as in schools, classrooms and on the playground equipment regularly throughout the school day. Masks are required on buses and in school throughout the school day by all students and staff. Students should wear their own masks and wash them regularly throughout the week. Each school will have an ample supply of masks for students who forget or lose their own masks. Some staff will be using protective shields in addition to or in-place of masks in certain instances. All school activities will require social distancing for the duration of the school day. Students will be spaced to one per seat on school buses, socially distanced in classrooms and required to stay distanced at recess and during all other activities throughout the school day. Currently the guidance we have received stipulates 6 feet as the required social distance. This guidance may change as updates are received before the start of school on September 8. Proper handwashing and sanitizing will be completed at the start of the school day and regularly throughout the school day. All schools will also require strict hallway traffic patterns to assure distance requirements are met during any passing time.

Classrooms have been measured to calculate the number of teachers and students that can be present at one time. Desks have been spaced to meet social distance guidelines. In cases where space can not be provided due to instructional needs plexi-glass spit shields will be installed. All classrooms will have hand-sanitizers and special cleaning supplies available that kill the virus but are safe for children. Each classroom will be thoroughly cleaned daily to further ensure safety. Every school will be provided with electro-static cleaning machines for cleaning throughout the day. Please see the specifics about this new equipment at this [LINK](#). Student schedules have been designed so students stay within the same grouping throughout the day for safety and to assist with contact tracing, if that becomes necessary.

The district has assessed each school's air circulation system for effectiveness and filtering capacity. An engineering firm is developing recommendations which are expected to include changes to more effective filters and ultraviolet light technology that kill viruses including COVID in duct-work. All water fountains will be closed except water-bottle filling stations. Door handles, railings and touch surfaces will be disinfected regularly throughout the school day and as part of the nightly cleaning protocol.

New guidance is expected within the next couple of weeks from the Vermont Department of Health pertaining to daily health checks that will be required for all students and staff prior to entry into any of the district facilities. We will update guidance as the guidelines are released. Unfortunately no visitors or parents will be allowed in our buildings this year while we combat COVID. Parents will be asked to drop off their students at the door and call the school or if their child needs to be released early or have an appointment, parents will call the school and then wait at the front door for their child to be released to them.

This Wednesday you will receive specific information from your child's school with detailed plans for that school's reopening. Again, later this week you will receive a survey requesting your choices for your child's education model while we are combating the virus. Please understand first and foremost our goal is to provide a safe learning environment for all students and staff. Second, we want to make sure we maintain the important relationships we have developed with students that are critical in educating children in today's world. Third, we strive to provide a quality curriculum and program that provides for your child's needs and assists them to develop into a well-rounded, skillful and productive adult.

Our goal moving forward is to update you weekly on the reopening plans for the district. Thank you for your cooperation. As always, if you have a question or concern please do not hesitate to contact your child's school or me at any time.

Tom DeBalsi
Superintendent of Schools
Hartford School District

Kevin Coach Christie
Chair, Hartford School Board