



Winchester Public Schools Planning for Fall 2020 Return to School

June 16, 2020



Who Decides? How much is under District Control?

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will issue draft guidelines/requirements in June 2020 for fall return to school, with final guidelines expected in July 2020. The DESE's Return-to-School Working Group is developing a K-12 summer and fall restart and recovery plan. This plan will include guidance/restrictions in the following areas:

- Physical and virtual learning environments;
- Teaching and learning;
- Operations and business services; and
- Behavioral health and social and emotional learning.

What will Guide our Planning for Return to School?

- Our plans will be based on our district's mission and foundational values about teaching and learning and commitment to wellness, as outlined in the priorities on the next slides.
- The state will issue guidelines related to social distancing and measures to keep students healthy in school, also as outlined later in this presentation.
- The district is planning for multiple re-opening scenarios and contingencies and will communicate these plans more specifically after the DESE issues its guidance/requirements.

District Working Group

- The district established a 25-member Educator Working Group in April to develop and administer surveys, research best instructional practices for distance/hybrid learning, develop practical solutions to COVID-19 challenges, and suggest needed professional development.
- The group included teachers and administrators from all grade levels and most schools, who worked together in sub-groups between whole-group meetings.
- The group reviewed survey results to be sure we identified strengths and challenges of distance learning for families, students, and staff members.
- Once more guidance is released by the DESE, working group members will focus on implementation and communication strategies.

Who and What Else is Involved?

- Local and State authorities will determine current disease levels before and during the school year, institute control measures in our community, and issue guidance.
- We will continually evaluate whether and to what extent external community organizations can safely use/access school sites.
- We will develop a plan for the possibility of repeated closures of classes, groups or entire facilities when persons associated with the facility or in the community become ill with COVID-19.
- We will develop a plan to further support students with access and functional needs who may be at increased risk of becoming infected or who have more intense learning needs.

Priorities for Return to School*

Plan for Multiple Reopening Scenarios and Contingencies to Ensure the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of all Students and Staff Members

These may include a return to in-person learning, the continuation of distance learning, or a blended approach involving some students and staff returning to in-person learning while others continue to participate in remote learning. Policies and procedures must be in place and maintained consistently for health screening and quarantine procedures, school closures, social distancing, hygiene, and cleaning aligned with the unique challenges of each scenario (in alignment with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

*Adapted from AASA

Priorities for Return to School*

Ensure Equitable Access to Technology Required for Distance Learning

In response to surveys, the district distributed chromebooks and Internet access hot spots to ensure all students had access to the technology needed for distance learning in the spring of 2020. Families will keep these devices for fall re-opening to ensure access as needed. Using FY20 funds, the district has pre-purchased additional devices. Student surveys indicated a high level of confidence in using the provided technology.

*Adapted from AASA

Priorities for Return to School*

Provide Continuing Support to Students and Adults to Address their Immediate and Long-Term Physical, Psychological, Social, and Emotional Needs

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is a critically important priority during the crisis and related school closures. The psychological, interpersonal, and emotional needs of students, staff members, and families must continue to be a key focal point as some form of reopening occurs. In addition to services and resources, SEL strategies and techniques must continue to be a consistent part of classroom instruction, reinforcing safety, well-being, and student engagement.

*Adapted from AASA

Priorities for Return to School*

Prepare for COVID-19-Related Changes in Human Resource Management and Practices

We are planning for a variety of human resource and related contractual issues that extend from the Covid-19 crisis into the reopening process. These range from continuing employment status of personnel during closure and related budget challenges to potential issues such as staff members' inability to return to full-time in-person employment as a result of personal health or family obligations. Working conditions for union groups must be negotiated in advance of fall re-opening.

*Adapted from AASA

Priorities for Return to School*

Plan and Implement Personalized and Differentiated Professional Learning

We must ensure that timely, effective, and personalized professional development is available for administrators, teachers, and support staff on a range of crisis-related topics related to technology and distance teaching/learning. These include strategies for making virtual learning engaging and interactive, addressing SEL needs among students and staff, and updating skills in the effective use of technology for instruction and communication. Staff member surveys have been completed and will guide our planning for summer and school-year professional development workshops and graduate courses.

*Adapted from AASA

Priorities for Return to School*

Review The Teaching-Learning-Assessment Process to Ensure Personalization, Engagement, and Differentiation

Whether remote or in-person, classrooms must be safe, healthy, and inviting learning communities. We must ensure that all students feel respected, acknowledged, and successful in their learning. Our curriculum must be culturally responsive and relevant, organized around such connecting schema as themes, universal and enduring understandings, and essential questions. Similarly, we must expand our assessments to include a balance of formative assessment, coaching and feedback, and summative assessment that is performance-centered. Despite the challenges of distance learning, classrooms and schools must become increasingly personalized, engaging, and differentiated environments that acknowledge and address students' varying readiness levels, interests, and learner profiles.

*Adapted from AASA

Priorities for Return to School*

Anticipate and Plan for COVID-19-Related Budget And Fiscal Management Issues

As schools reopen, we must be alert to potential funding shortages, shortfalls, and budget reallocation to fund a range of health and sanitation supplies (e.g., cleaning/sanitation supplies, hand sanitizer, masks, gloves) as well as budgetary implications of social-distancing requirements (e.g., funding transportation as well as enhancements of classroom spaces and furniture arrangements). There are likely to be increased staffing needs as well to facilitate social distancing, support distance learning, and substitute for ill/absent staff members.

*Adapted from AASA

How can we Promote Healthy Hygiene Practices*?

- We will teach and reinforce washing hands, avoiding contact with one's eyes, nose, and mouth, and covering coughs and sneezes among students and staff members.
- We will teach and reinforce use of cloth face coverings, masks, or face shields. Face coverings are most essential when physical distancing is not practicable.
- We must ensure adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, tissues, no-touch trash cans, face coverings and hand sanitizers with at least 60 percent ethyl alcohol for staff and children who can safely use hand sanitizer.

*CA Dept of Public Health

How can we clean, disinfect, and ventilate safely*?

- We will suspend or modify use of site resources that necessitate sharing or touching items. For example, suspending use of drinking fountains and instead encouraging the use of reusable water bottles.
- Staff members will clean and disinfect frequently-touched surfaces within school and on school buses at least daily and, as practicable, frequently throughout the day by trained custodial staff.
- Buses will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected daily and after transporting any individual who is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.

*CA Dept of Public Health

How can we clean, disinfect, and ventilate safely*?

- We will limit use of shared playground equipment in favor of physical activities that require less contact with surfaces.
- We will limit sharing of objects and equipment, such as toys, games and art supplies to the extent practicable. Where allowed, we will clean and disinfect between uses.
- When choosing cleaning products, we will use those approved for use against COVID-19 on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved list “N” and follow product instructions.
- We will ensure proper ventilation during cleaning and disinfecting and introduce fresh outdoor air as much as possible, for example, by opening windows where practicable. We will replace and check air filters and filtration systems to ensure optimal air quality.

*Adapted from CA Dept of Public Health

How can we clean, disinfect, and ventilate safely*?

- We will keep each child's belongings separated and in individually labeled storage containers, cubbies or areas.
- All belongings will be taken home each day to be cleaned.
- We will ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high-touch materials (art supplies, equipment, etc.) to the extent practicable or limit use of supplies and equipment to one group of children at a time and clean and disinfect between uses.
- We will avoid sharing electronic devices, clothing, toys, books and other games or learning aids as much as practicable.

*Adapted from CA Dept of Public Health

How will we Implement Social Distancing Inside and Outside the Classroom*?

- Open windows and maximize space between students and between students and the driver on school buses where practicable.
- Minimize contact at school between students, staff, families and the community at the beginning and end of the school day.
- Stagger arrival and drop off-times and locations as consistently as practicable as to minimize scheduling challenges for families.
- Designate routes for entry and exit, using as many entrances as feasible.

*Adapted from CA Dept of Public Health

How will we Implement Social Distancing Inside and Outside the Classroom*?

- Students will remain in the same space and in groups as small and consistent as practicable. We will keep the same students and teacher or staff with each group, to the greatest extent practicable.
- We will minimize movement of students and teachers or staff as much as practicable. Maximize space between seating and desks.
- We will redesign activities for smaller groups and rearrange furniture and play spaces to maintain separation.
- We will provide instructions for maximizing spacing and ways to minimize movement in both indoor and outdoor spaces that are easy for students to understand and are developmentally appropriate.

*Adapted from CA Dept of Public Health

How will we Implement Social Distancing Inside and Outside the Classroom*?

- We will limit nonessential visitors, volunteers and activities involving other groups at the same time.
- We will limit communal activities where practicable.
- We will consider use of non-classroom space for instruction, including regular use of outdoor space, weather permitting.
- We will minimize congregate movement through hallways as much as practicable.
- We will serve meals in classrooms or outdoors instead of cafeterias or group dining rooms where practicable. We may serve individually plated or bagged meals.
- We will hold recess in separated areas designated by class.

*Adapted from CA Dept of Public Health

How will we Monitor for Illness and React to it?

- We will actively encourage staff and students who are sick or who have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 to stay home.
- Implement screening and other procedures for all staff and students entering the facility. These will likely include closer tracking of all who enter the building and at-home temperature and wellness checks each day.
- We will document/track incidents of possible exposure and notify local health officials, staff and families immediately of any positive case of COVID-19, while maintaining confidentiality, as required under FERPA and state law related to privacy of educational records.

How will we handle illness at school?

- Each school will have an isolation room or area to separate anyone who exhibits symptoms of COVID-19.
- Any students or staff exhibiting symptoms will immediately be required to wear a face covering and be required to wait in an isolation area until they can be transported home or to a healthcare facility, as soon as practicable.
- Areas used by any sick person will be closed and not used before cleaning and disinfection.
- Sick staff members and students may not return until they have met CDC criteria to discontinue home isolation, including 3 days with no fever, symptoms have improved and 10 days since symptoms first appeared.

What if a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19?

- When a student, teacher or staff member tests positive for COVID-19 and has exposed others at the school, in consultation with the local public health department, we may decide whether school closure is warranted, including the length of time necessary, based on the risk level within the specific community as determined by the local public health officer.
- Given standard guidance for isolation at home for at least 14 days after close contact, the classroom or office where the patient was based will typically need to close temporarily as students or staff isolate.
- Additional close contacts at school outside of a classroom should also isolate at home.

What do surveys tell us?

- Our students are showing resilience and are quite engaged, especially at the lower grade levels.
- Some families wish for more consistency, predictability, student accountability and academic rigor during distance learning.
- Families are quite stressed by balancing work/home responsibilities; students are less stressed than expected.
- Staff members have learned quickly how to use technology and plan better for distance learning, but many still need considerable training and support.
- Student enjoy choice and flexibility in scheduling learning. They greatly appreciate individual feedback and connection with teachers.

Next Steps?

- We will review DESE guidelines and ensure that our plans for social distancing and safe school environments align with these and then share these with families as soon as practical.
- The 25-member Educator Working Group will continue to advise the district on plans.
- Over a hundred teachers have committed to work together this summer to develop distance learning lessons/assessments in preparation for the fall.
- We will order appropriate supplies/materials/equipment, implement training, coordinate with the department of public works to develop cleaning protocols, and continue to consult with public health officials regarding protocols and current data.
- We will survey families to learn more about any special concerns they have for the return to school.
- The uncertain months ahead will test us greatly. We appreciate the community's patience and support as we navigate the next few months together.