

Community Forum

FAQ

July 29, 2020

1:00 p.m.

Mr. Leone opened the conversation by sharing all Connecticut school districts were required to submit to the state three Reopening of School plans by Friday, July 24, 2020. Phase 1 – Opening of Schools with Social Distancing. Phase 2 – Hybrid Model and Phase 3 – Remote Learning.

Mr. Leone provided some background that the state assured guidance from the Department of Public Health (DPH) on criteria for when schools should operate in each Phase and when to transition from one Phase to another based upon health data in our state. On Monday, Governor Lamont and Commissioner of Education, Dr. Cardona announced that the District's will have the authority to decide on what Phase they plan to reopen schools without providing the districts with the promised guidance from the state, CSDE and DPH.

Mr. Leone and fellow Superintendents are pushing back on the state to provide districts with the promised DPH guidance and guidelines. Mr. Leone further commented he will not rush into a decision. This is not an easy decision or one he will take lightly. This decision will not be made without sound public health guidelines and data.

Mr. Leone opened the forum for questions.

Q. What is the distance for the kids on the bus?

A. There are not specific state guidelines for social distancing on busses. The district is anticipating approximately 85% capacity on our busses based upon returns of Transportation Waivers.

Q. Is there a plan to address social-emotional issues and mental health?

A. Yes, this information can be found within our Reopening Plan. The district is cognizant that students will not have been in school for 5 months and will provide additional counseling if necessary. The district will address student needs on an individual basis.

Q. Any changes based on new state guidelines giving each district opening parameters authority?

A. No. The biggest issue that needs to be addressed is the promised guidelines from the State of Connecticut, Department of Education and DPH on clarifying on opening of schools and transitioning in Phase 1, 2 and 3.

Q. Do we have any guidelines in regards to elective remote learning?

A. Yes. This information has been sent out over the last few weeks and will be included in the school protocol information you will receive from your school(s). In short, should you elect to have your child remote learn, please email your Principal with child's name and grade and from there, your Principal will provide you further information and guidance.

Q. How aligned is the remote learning *Edgenuity* program to the in-class curriculum/instruction? Is the transition smooth to go out/return to school as far as grades?

A. Remote learning Edgenuity will need to be supplemented with teacher check ins. Edgenuity is also aligned to Common Core. Yes, the transition is smooth to go out/return as far as grades.

Q. If we do go to a hybrid schedule will the students be on the same days each week regularly or will the days change each week?

A. If the district is in Phase 2 – Hybrid model, students will attend on the same day each week. If a student attends on a Monday and Tuesday, students will always attend on a Monday and Tuesday throughout the time period we are in the Hybrid model or if for any reason the district has to transition in or out of the Hybrid model.

Q. What kinds of cleaning products will be used? Is bleach used or are green products still going to be the norm?

A. Watered down bleach is used for cleaning. The district is using cleaning products recommended by the DPH.

Q. If a Pre-K student starts the year distance, will there be an in-person spot held for them?

A. Yes. Their spot is held.

Q. Will advisory be used for this purpose (middle schoolers)?

A. Advisory will be used for check in's. Ongoing adjustments will be made to meet the needs of the student at the secondary level.

Q. Are outdoor classes part of the plan? How will it be decided if a class can be held outdoors? (especially high school level)

A. Yes. We are also pleased to announce a partnership with White Memorial where they will let the district use dozens of picnic table for outdoor classes . The district will also be using a grant to purchase more outdoor benches and tables for our schools.

Outdoor instruction will be decided at each level, by teachers and their administration.

Q. Are parents/other visitors going to be allowed into the school buildings for pickups/drop-offs? What about for volunteering or other similar reasons?

A. Schools protocols will be released on Monday, August 3, and will address this question. No volunteers allowed in the buildings this coming fall. We hope to change this in the future based upon state guidance as it relates to COVID cases in our state.

Q. Are sports being modified/given guidelines specific to their risks?

A. CIAC is going to make an announcement on July 30 regarding high school and middle school sports. The district's Athletic Director and coaches are currently working on what fall sports could look like if there are no sanctions. More to come on this topic.

Q. What will the classroom environment look like for younger students (first grade)? Will they be able to interact/work together? If not, how will social development be handled?

A. Yes, students will be able to interact and work together. They will be at tables but spaced farther apart.

Q. What is the district's plan for contact tracing? If a student in the classroom tests positive will all students' families in the class be notified? And will all students in the class need to quarantine/go to virtual learning?

A. Everyone, staff and students, will self-screen by utilizing a self-monitoring app daily in order to attend work/school. If a student tests positive, the district will notify families in the classroom and also maintain privacy of that student. If the student also came in contact with others on a bus, those families will be notified as well. The district will follow CDC regulations/guidelines on the need to quarantine/move to remote learning for that classroom/situation.

Q. If we do in person learning, will we start with the alternate day schedule for the middle school or a more traditional and can you speak to the number of students in a cohort or classroom?

A. At this time, we do not know what Phase the district will open for the first day of school. An announcement will be made on August 13 on how the district will open schools based on data and cases in the state. If we start in Phase 1 it will be more traditional.

Q. For Elementary students will there be any form or recess daily? What will it be? How frequent are mask breaks and how will that be handled?

A. Yes, there will be morning recess and afternoon recess. We are also encouraging masks breaks for all grade levels.

Q. For remote learning in high school, what happens if we decided a few weeks into school that we would like to go remote? When would they be able to return to regular in school classes if they go remote?

A. If a few weeks into school you would like for your child to go to remote learning, please send an email to your school Principal and within 24-48 hours the district will be able to set your child up for remote learning. Likewise, if your child starts remote and wants to transition into live instruction, it is the same process. Send an email to your building Principal and within 24-48 hours the district can transition your child back to live instruction, as well as arrange bus transportation if needed.

Q. Do we have any guidelines in regards to elective remote learning?

A. The guidelines are to provide the best possible engaging instruction for students. The district students will each have technology access; students will have individual log in and access to their teacher via live instruction.

Q. Will sports go to an intra-mural only competition model?

A. The district is awaiting further guidance from CIAC that is expected on July 30. The district is contingency planning in the event CIAC cancels fall sports.

Q. Can students bring in their own supplies or are they using just what is provided in the classroom?

A. Supply list are part of the protocols that are forthcoming. And yes, students can bring in their own supplies.

Q. For Phase 2, is the schedule the same for elementary as it is for middle/high school? Will the classes be broken into small groups with alternating days? Also, is the plan to move the 5th grade class up to Wamogo for the 2021-2022 school year now on hold?

A. No, Middle and High School will follow their regular schedule in Phase 2. Elementary will follow their regular schedule. Classes will be broken up in Phase 2. Some students are live instruction on Monday, Tuesday with their cohorts remote learning. All students' remote learning on Wednesday to allow for deep cleaning. And then on Thursday, Friday, cohorts who remote learned on Monday, Tuesday will be live with their cohorts doing remote learning.

At this time, we are still moving forward with the sixth grade moving up to Wamogo for the 2021-2022 school year.

Q. If you are home on Thursday/Friday are you expected to be watching the classroom online or just completing the work for those days?

A. The expectation is the student will log in when they are home and participate.

Q. If at some point we need to move into Phase 3, how will this look different (or the same) from distance learning last spring? Specifically, will it be completely asynchronous again or will there be periods of live/interactive instruction, including opportunities for small-groups & 1:1 interaction with the teacher?

A. There will be live regular sessions. Student schedules are not changing. There will be fewer canned videos and a lot more creative instruction.

Q. The hybrid schedule is for Elementary as well? So every student is going to be doing a mix of remote and in-school?

A. Yes.

Q. Will any air conditioning be brought into classrooms? Is the expectation the children have to wear a mask at their desk if they are 6 feet apart? Just thinking of the heat of the mask?

A. The district will not be bringing in air conditioning into the classrooms. The district has serviced fans in the classroom to help circulate air from outside. For rooms that do not have fans, the district is looking to provide floor fans to circulate air.

It is a requirement from the State Department of Education that it is the expectation for children to wear a mask even if they are 6 feet apart.

The district is very mindful of the issue of heat and humidity and wearing masks. Based on the weather and the requirement to wear masks, there may be a need to have more early dismissal days than usual.

Q. What is the threshold for the number of cases in the community for deciding which phase school will be in? How will it work with kids who receive help by other staff i.e. OT, Speech?

A. We are awaiting the state and DPH to advise school districts of this promised guidance. In regard to other services; if we are in Phase 1 it is likely the student and instructor will be separated by plexiglas. For OT/PT there will be heavy cleaning of materials between uses. If we are in Phase 2, some instruction will be live while some remote.

Q. We live out of district. My daughter is starting at Wamogo in the Ag Science program. What is she starts in school and data changes in our town. Will she have to stay home?

A. Unable to answer this question as we have been awaiting data from the state and DPH. If the district is forced to make this decision without this guidance, we will make it with medical data on cases in the state, area.

Q. Regarding transmissions through air conditioning, did you say additional filters will be installed in the heat and air conditioning systems?

A. All systems have filters. We do not have many air conditioners in schools. Filters will be changed more often than in the past.

Q. If classes are held outside, how do students who are learning from home able to follow the class or login and watch?

A. There will be a computer with the class so children who are remote learning can still view/participate. Also, Wi-Fi in all buildings has been upgraded as well as bandwidth.

Q. If a student is asymptomatic but has had contact with someone who is confirmed to have COVID 19, will the student be permitted to attend in-person classes? How would the district monitor that?

A. All students and staff will complete a daily health and wellness screening prior to attending school. If a student has been in contact with someone who is confirmed to have COVID-19, they would fail the daily wellness survey and not receive approval to attend school.

Q. In Phase 2, will virtual class meetings be recorded in case a student can't attend at the specific time do to childcare circumstances? It was vital for successful distance learning for us parents to be able to view and discuss the lessons and topics from both the live and pre-recorded videos. We would want to continue that but it would be a challenge if meetings were not accessible afterwards. Oftentimes key details/info would be discussed during those very rich conversations.

A. As of today, there will be no recordings for Phase 2 or Phase 3. There will be live instruction in order to keep students on a regular school schedule.

Understand pre-record and preload instruction had other drawbacks. The district does not see this being standing operation procedure.

Q. Can you speak about lunchroom, hallway, special rooms, etc. protocols?

A. Protocols will be released by schools on August 3. Protocols may look a little different by school based on layout. The lunch room will be at 50% capacity. Water fountains that are not touch-less will be shut off. Hallways will have staggered dismissal times. The district will spend the first three days of school reviewing protocols.

Q. If student visits a state during the school year listed in Connecticut's travel quarantine order, will that student be permitted to attend in-person classes or must the student quarantine first (and for how long)?

A. A letter will be sent to the community to address this issue on August 3 informing parents they need to follow Connecticut travel quarantine orders if they visit a state on the quarantine list. The current requirement is to self-quarantine for 14 days. This is a non-negotiable issue.

Q. Are the daily health forms going to be online or do we need to send them in with students every day?

A. No, the daily health assessment tool is online. Parents will receive information on the daily health assessment tool on August 17. We understand this will be a learning process and will work with families as needed.

Q. If a student travels to Florida in the month of August and does not quarantine will that child be allowed in school

A. If the child travels to Florida and we learn they have not quarantined for the required 14 days, the child will be sent home.

Q. Will there be freshman activities before school starts this year?

A. Yes. Froshfest is planned and Mr. Loveland will be releasing information regarding Froshfest in the coming weeks.

Q. Would the LIVE in-person lessons in the classroom be recorded so that those lessons can be watched afterwards in case parents' work schedules won't allow our remote students to attend in real time?

A. At this point in time, we are not expecting to record live in-person instruction. The district is trying to maintain a normal schedule for our students. Mr. Leone will take this issue back to the group, but as of today, we will not be recording the live in-person instruction.

Q. How often will the bathrooms be cleaned and how many children are allowed in at one time?

A. Bathrooms will be cleaned multiple times a day. No more than two children in the bathroom at any one time. May vary by facility based on size of bathroom.

Q. Will there be any in person or virtual orientation activities for Kindergarten?

A. Orientation will be a hybrid; some in-person and some virtual. Information will be forthcoming from the schools.

Q. Are there measures being taken to ensure children take responsibility for their own compliance that's not punitive?

A. Absolutely. This is not about punishing student. It is about working with students and families for compliance.

Q. Will classrooms be cleaned between classes?

A. Elementary classrooms are reserved for the same students. At the high school level, it is virtually impossible to do so.

Q. Will water fountains be on?

A. Touch-less water fountains will be on. All others will be turned off.

Q. Will each class have a webcam?

A. Each teacher will have a document web camera that will allow them to broadcast and show documents. Cameras will be focused on the teacher and not the students.

Q. Who will monitor how many students are in the bathrooms at a given time?

A. Bathroom monitors may be a teacher duty, an admin duty, or a SRO duty. It depends on the school. We have an "all hands on deck mentality."

Q. Will there be any remote extra-curricular activities similar to those offered in the spring?

A. The district hopes to offer After School Enrichment classes. We are requesting providers offer a remote component to the class as well.