

Community Forum

FAQ

July 22, 2020

1:00 p.m.

Q. What does the full time distance learning option look like? If we should start the year like that will we be assigned to a classroom/teacher and integrated into that classroom? If the virus gets under control in most of the country/or guidance from CDC changes?

A. The district is no longer referring to it as Distance Learning. The district will be providing Remote Learning. For K-6, this will be live remote instruction. 7-12 remote learning will have live instruction combined with Engenuity support. Should we go to full remote learning students will receive a daily link to join their classroom. Each student will receive a device to access their teacher. Grading will not be Pass/Fail. Students whose families choose remote learning will be assigned to a classroom teacher.

Q. If we come back to in person school in spring semester how will we be placed in classroom?

A. If students return from remote learning in the spring, they will return to the classroom to which they were assigned at the start of the school year.

Q. What is the threshold of rise in cases that would move us from phase 1 to 2? Are we going to go back and forth between phase 1 and 2 or 2 and 3 if cases go up and down?

A. The district is still waiting for direction from the DPH, state and CSDE on when schools will move from Phase I, II or III.

Q. Can you say a bit about how the teachers are feeling (in general) about returning to the classroom full time?

A. Everybody is struggling with returning and how to feel about it. There are staff dealing with medical concerns. Some have questions and we are addressing the on a case-by-case basis.

Q. The Reopening document, page 30 was cut off mid sentence regarding Special Education. When can we see the full information on special education?

A. Page 30 Special Education (Requirements) of the Reopening document Version 3.0 was corrected and reposted the district website. The Special Education (Requirements) page 33 of Reopening documents Version 4.0 is correct and will be posted on the district website.

Q. So a kindergartner and a 1st grader would be expected to sit at a computer for the full length of the day watching their peers in a classroom?

A. Not all day. Silent reading, lunch, recess breaks, and their own work time will also be part of the daily schedule.

Q. I saw a news blurb come across my screen yesterday about the CT Teachers union wants delayed opening. Do you know anything about that?

A. We are proudly working with two teacher unions on reopening. This district is able to social distance students 6' at the elementary level and 5-6' at the secondary level. This may not be the case with other districts. The district also continues to address PPE requests, dividers in classroom requests, working with teachers and staff to address any reopening concerns they may have. I am proud of our collaboration with the unions and all staff.

Q. Can we still sign up for transportation waiver?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you explain what cohort learning is?

A. Cohorts apply in the Hybrid Model of Phase II which is where a small group of students by grade level will attend school on a given day and their like counterparts will be home with live stream learning. The district is trying to keep siblings together when looking at cohorts.

Q. What does the 7-12 remote learning model look like?

A. 7-12 remote learning is a combination of live streaming and support through a program called Edgenuity.

Q. When do we have to make the choice of remote versus in school? And who and how do we communicate this to the school?

A. You can make the choice at any time. It is a simple process. Please notify your building Principal via email with your child's name and grade. If you choose remote learning for medical reasons we ask you contact Julie Haggard (LPS) or Deb Foley (RSD6) in Student Services. A doctor's note is requested for medical reasons and the district has to go through some extra documentation with this process.

Q. Have we explored outdoor learning for Sept/Oct? I'm sure there are hurdles but curious main reasons why we aren't we pursuing as risk is so much lower outside?

A. Yes. This will be in Version 4.0 of the Reopening Plan. Outdoor learning is encouraged but will look different school-by-school based on their facilities.

Q. Are teachers going to be expected to act as nurses filling out the health checks for younger students every day?

A. No. On or about August 15 you will receive a letter on how the district will address wellness. This is a responsibility of everyone. Students and staff will do a daily self-inventory answering 5 basic questions. Based on the results will determine if you are able to attend school or stay home. This is something extra we did not need to put in our plan but felt it was necessary for the safety and well being of all our staff, students and community.

Q. If our child is PM PreK every day what's the plan for the first 3 days being 1/2 days? Do they go at all?

A. The district will likely do a three-day orientation for AM PreK and the next three days do a three-day orientation for PM PreK. More information to come on schedule and PreK orientation.

Q. My daughter would like to know how AG would be handled whether we go to school or studying virtually?

A. For Phase I and II, Ag will look somewhat normal with the animals returning in the fall. With Phase III it will be a little different. There will be live streaming classes however Edgenuity does not offer AgSci components so we will be looking for ways to supplement learning. SAE's (Student Ag Experiences) will still take place.

Q. What happens when the first child comes down with a fever and cough so we don't go into a mass panic at the school?

A. The student will go to the nurse. By requirement they get an isolation area until a parent is able to pick them up. A student must be fever free for 24 hours prior to returning to school. Please keep in mind, just because a child has a fever or cough does not mean they have COVID. If identified the student tests positive for COVID we start contact tracing and notify the Torrington Area Health Department, the DPH and CSDE. The district will not release any child or staff member information. All privacy rights are respected.

Q. I have a school computer- but plan to withdraw for the fall. Can I keep using the computers, or how can return them?

A. If you are choosing home remote learning the district will provide a computer. If you are choosing to homeschool your child the computer comes back to district. There will be more information forthcoming on how to turn technology for upgrades, cleaning and software security.

Q. Will there be staggered drop off/pick up times at the elementary level?

A. Information on drop off and pick up times will be included in the protocol packet released on August 3rd. This will vary by each school.

Q. What is the protocol if a child gets a fever and cough? Will they need a COVID test before returning the school? Will siblings need to stay home too?

A. The student will go to the nurse. By requirement they get their own isolation area until a parent is able to pick them up. A student must be fever free for 24 hours prior to returning to school. There is no mandate on a COVID-19 test but always best to seek medical diagnosis.

Q. What if I am not comfortable sending my child to school if you decide to go in-person teaching? How will this work? Will it be mandated to attend in person? What is the plan for special services? PT, OT, Speech, ect?

A. Your child is not mandated to attend in person. You can keep your child home to learn remotely. If you choose to do so please email your school principal with your child's name and grade so accommodations can be arranged. For other services such as speech, a clear shield will be set up between the student and teacher. PT/OT equipment will be cleaned between use. If the district is in Phase I and II services will be on going. We are looking to keep the Life Skills classes in tact for Phase I and Phase II.

Q. How will grading work if you have students learning in different manners?

A. Grading based on assignments and completion of work. These are the same expectations whether you are learning remotely at home. There will be no pass/fail. Students will earn grades.

Q. If families choose remote learning option does it lighten the burden of teachers and safety measures inside the building?

A. It will lighten some load. We are not seeing a large number of students opting out to stay home. There are not enough to consolidate classes to have a special remote learning teacher.

Q. Will middle and high school kids still have the opportunity to participate in band?

A. Will be meeting with chorus and band teachers in the following week. There are some encouraging pieces on how we can do band and chorus. There is need for larger rooms and space. Everyone will be facing the same way with spacing. Concerts are TBD.

Q. How many students will be in each classroom? If one child runs a fever will the whole class be out of school for 2 weeks?

A. Number of students in a classroom depends on the size of the room and the course. On the elementary level we have some classes with as few as 9 students and some in the range of 14-15 students. On the secondary level there are no regular classes above 19 or 20 students.

Q. What if the child presents at school and has symptoms but the parent completed the question prior to the child getting to school?

A. Students will be sent to the nurse and be placed in the isolated area until someone comes to pick them up. Based on symptoms, will follow protocols. Please keep in mind, just because a child has a cough or a temperature does not mean they have COVID.

Q. What will lunch look like?

A. We are expanding lunch waves and cutting capacity in half. We are working with food services to do more online ordering. Our cafeterias are large with good ventilation.

Q. Is Froshfest still occurring?

A. Yes. Working with Mr. Loveland on that now so it can be held outdoors. Expect to hear something from the school in the next two weeks.

Q. Will there be a kindergarten orientation and intermediate school orientation for 4th graders?

A. Yes. Information will be coming forthcoming from schools on August 3rd.

Q. Does district have pulse oximeters? I'm concerned for all that have to wear a mask all day. If anyone not feeling well, perhaps their oxygen is running low.

A. The district will commit to looking into having oximeters in the nurse's offices.

Q. Concern about struggling with wearing a mask all day?

A. There will be mask breaks throughout the day. The district will work with every child and family.

Q. For families with more than one child in the school system, if we go to phase 2, will scheduling be considered to have the kids be assigned to the same cohort?

A. The district will do its best for siblings to be assigned to the same cohort but cannot promise. At the secondary level it becomes more difficult because of the individualized schedules by student.

Q. Do you have the ability to temp scan the children's' foreheads?

A. Yes. All nurses will have temperature scan. We will not be scanning staff or students every day when they walk in their building. This is not a requirement by state DPH or CSDE.

Q. Can you explain what the remote learning will look like if a parent chooses that option?

A. For K-6 students will have a log in with live instruction. They will be provided a break time, reading time, classwork time and recess. On the secondary level, it will be a combination of Engenuity and live instruction.

Q. Will snow days be replaced with virtual learning days if the kids are still physically attending school?

A. If kids are still physically attending school the district does not anticipate replacing the snow day with virtual learning. If we are in Phase II or III, there is a possibility to do so.

Q. If certain parents repeatedly send sick kids to school or send kids without masks, is the school district prepared to tell the parents that the kids must learn remotely?

A. The district will work with families if this occurs. The district does not have the legal right to tell a parent their child cannot attend school.

Q. Has the district looked into transparent facemasks especially with the younger kids so they can see facial expressions of their peers as well as their teacher?

A. Yes. There will be some students who will wear face shields.

Q. Do you anticipate student testing/swabbing requirements?

A. No. Universal testing would give everyone piece of mind but I do not anticipate it happening in our state.

Q. For the remote learning option, will the student have to be on their computer for most or all of the school day? (Keeping to the same schedule of the students physically in the classroom)? Are specials included/required?

A. Students will be on their computers for a period of time during the school day. Some days may be more than others based upon the lesson. There will be times when they are off the computer for work time and reading.

Q. If we are choosing remote learning will there be a supply list needed for home?

A. Yes. This will be included with procedures and protocols released on August 3rd.

Q. If you do get a large uptick of families choosing to stay home how would that change remote learning from the way it's presented currently

A. If we got a cluster in a grade we may go to a remote learning team where a teacher is designated to that team. We would need about 14-18 students by grade in a district to make that feasible.

Q. Will high school sports continue?

A. CIAC is pending. As of today, we are expecting fall sports to return.

Q. Will there be a 7th grade orientation?

A. Yes there will be. It may be a little bit different from prior years with a virtual component. We will be working a lot with students on procedures and protocols the first three days of school.

Q. Upgrade or adjustment of ventilation systems or opening of windows when appropriate?

A. Yes on opening windows. The district is in need of some screens and is working on obtaining them as possible. Since there is not central air in all buildings, we are looking for floor fans to circulate air through rooms without fans. The district may also have more early release days than usual if temperatures and humidity rises.

Q. If your child chooses to wear a face shield do they also need to wear a mask?

A. Guidance from the state says students are to wear a "face covering." If you get a note that says you can't wear a mask, please make sure to consider a face shield.

Q. If a child can't physically come to school due to a fever or similar, would they be allowed to join their classroom remotely that day (if they feel well enough)?

A. We are currently working on this issue. It is hard on just a few hours to program that change.

Q. Parents donate tissues each year. Should we also donate antibacterial wipes and hand sanitizer?

A. Yes, the district will accept donated antibacterial wipes. The district is less inclined to accept hand sanitizers as some on the market have issues and could cause problems for kids.

Q. Regarding lunchroom setup at LHS - would 4 students at a table be possible and still maintain social distancing since they will have masks off to eat?

A. The language from the state suggests 6' distancing "when feasible." In the LHS cafeteria is somewhere between 4-5' distancing at the lunch tables.

Q. Is the district supplying masks/shields to students?

A. Depends on student need. Some students have specific needs. We are addressing those as they arise. The district is supplying back to school gators (the one that sits around their necks) will also have extra masks in case a student is in need.

Q. How do you balance school security with outdoor learning and open windows etc?

A. Very carefully. Some schools have cameras in different areas some do not. We will handle this on a school-by-school basis.

Q. What if someone in the cohort or family member test positive?

A. Start contact tracing. Torrington Area Health, DPH and CSDE will also be notified. The district will follow guidance, procedures and protocols.

Q. Will there be different space requirements for in-person students who have a 'medical' excuse to be exempt from wearing a face covering to protect the other students/teacher in the classroom?

A. There is not that guidance. We asked for clarification but have not received it yet

Q. For the live streaming of lessons, will those be recorded? If yes, how will safety measures be in place to make sure our children are not recorded and put on social media or other links without our permission?

A. Lessons will be live streamed, just as if you are in the classroom. There will be no recording of this and the cameras will not be facing the classroom, they will be facing the teacher.

Q. Are substitutes readily available to take over for various grades if needed?

A. Each building will have a little extra coverage built in this year. The district is working with a substitute pool and will assign one substitute per building. The district is waiting to see protocols from Kelly Services who supply our substitute teachers.

Q. What are the chances children return to school full time? When will that be determined?

A. As of today, the plan is to return to school full time on August 26.

Q. How can we ensure students keep a distance and masks on the bus?

A. Currently, all the state is requiring is for kids to wear a mask on the bus. Busses will be disinfected between runs every single day.