



Colchester Public Schools

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Dear Families and Caregivers,

I wanted to give you a brief update on what we know about the reopening of schools as of today, August 10, 2021. All districts received an update from the CT State Department of Education and CT Department of Public Health this week that gave some general guidelines, but many questions remained unanswered. We anticipate that more guidance will be shared later this month and, to be clear, the District *will* follow the guidelines from the State and public health officials regarding our return to school.

What we know as of August 10, 2021:

1. All schools will have **100% in-person instruction**, with no cohorts or alternating days of instruction.
2. There is **no** remote learning option or Voluntary At-Home option (except when students are required to quarantine or as determined by an IEP).
3. No district is permitted to have remote inclement weather days for the 2021-22 school year.
4. A COVID vaccination is **not** required for staff or students to return to school.
5. **Proof** of a COVID vaccination is **not** required for staff or students to return to school.
6. Per Executive Order that remains in effect until September 30, 2021 **all staff, students and visitors are required to wear masks** until that date regardless of vaccination status.
7. The State **has not yet determined** whether or not students and staff will have to wear masks after September 30, 2021.
8. Students **will** be required to wear masks on school buses.
9. Students **will not** be required to wear masks outside for PE or recess.
10. Physical distancing has been reduced to 3 feet from 6 feet. This change will allow for different classroom configurations rather than just rows of desks.
11. Cohorting of students is no longer required.
12. Students in grades K-8 will be able to eat in the cafeteria this year with some cohorting or change in seating arrangements. Students at Bacon Academy will continue to use the cafeteria for lunch, but specific seating arrangements have not yet been determined.
13. The State is recommending that districts not quarantine an entire class or cohort if there is a positive COVID-19 case. Instead, they are recommending that only students within 3 feet of a positive case should quarantine **if they are not fully vaccinated**. The quarantine period remains at 10 calendar days, although we are exploring the opportunity to shorten that period through the use of a PCR test.

14. Staff or students that are fully vaccinated **will not be required to quarantine** if they are symptom free and provide proof of vaccination upon request.
15. Sports, band, and chorus guidance remains similar to last school year.

Our staff is working on plans for visitor access, meeting formats, meet & greets, back-to-school nights, classroom configurations, lunch waves, cafeteria configurations, chorus and band options, and remote learning plans for students who are required to quarantine. This information will be shared in the coming weeks.

It is important to note that many of these items may change prior to our first day of school on September 2nd. We will share any updates with you as soon as they are provided by the State.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Burt", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeffrey Burt, Superintendent