



RIDGEFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Reopening of Schools Plan

Draft submission to the Board of Education

Dr. Susie Da Silva, Superintendent of Schools

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RIDGEFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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*Susie Da Silva, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools*

Dear Ridgefield Community,

The heart of every community is its school system. The school system has a great responsibility to its community, and the children and families it serves. Ridgefield Public Schools' *true north*, its *internal compass*, is to ensure that our children are cared for physically and emotionally, first. Now, more than ever, we are guided by the expertise from both in and out of the school district. By doing this, we have gained partners in the journey to reopen schools. This partnership is one that comes together with varied perspectives, opinions and positions on how best to open school, yet, at its core maintains the same focus, the health and wellness of its children and their families.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Steering and Reopening Committees for their time, energy, and contributions in navigating and helping to create a roadmap that is both safe and flexible. I would also like to thank Ms. Karen Dewing and Dr. Elizabeth Hannaway, Co-Chairs of the Reopening Committee, for their significant leadership and remaining focused on the *true north* of our school system.

We have prepared this 'Reopening of Schools Plan' as a comprehensive document that will guide you through CSDE requirements, our journey, as well as inform you on the steps and plans for the reopening of school this Fall. While we have made every effort to plan as much as possible, it is important that we all understand where the District had autonomy in its planning and where it did not. The state has formally communicated (on 7/21/2020) that Districts must provide a full, five day physical school experience for all students, thus, while it is not the administration's recommendation, we have complied with the states directive. We will continue to advocate on behalf of the District.

Additionally, it was and will continue to be necessary to be flexible and willing to evolve. We will always strive to be better, even if that means changing course: As tools and technology evolve, so will we. As best practices in the teaching and learning evolve, so will we. As health and safety protocols evolve, so will we.

You can continue to expect frequent communication and updates as we receive them.

Warmly,

Susie

Susie Da Silva, Ed.D.

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I. RPS REOPENING SCHOOLS: AN INTRODUCTION

Guiding Principles of RPS Plan

As the Ridgefield Public Schools' Reopening Committee began its work, it started by designing its mission statement: *The RPS Reopening of Schools Committee's mission is to develop a clear and cohesive plan for reopening the Ridgefield Public Schools for all learners and staff members, so that students may remain safe and healthy while engaging in rigorous, relevant and personalized learning experiences.* This mission is an extension of the RPS District Mission statement, but also sets the stage for the guiding principles of this plan:

1. Provide a safe learning environment for students, and a safe working environment for faculty and staff.
2. Deliver necessary training and support to faculty, staff, students, and families on the components of this plan.
3. Ensure rigorous academic instruction, aligned with state and federal standards, regardless of the model of reopening that is implemented.
4. Support student's social-emotional well-being upon reengagement and throughout the school year.
5. Ensure access for all learners: technologically, linguistically, and developmentally.
6. Deliver clear, regular communication to students, parents, faculty, staff, and community members regarding this plan.

As stakeholders review this plan, take note that each component within it can be linked back to one of these guiding principles. Further, RPS recognizes that its plan must have *flexibility* built into its structure, as the landscape of our public health crisis continues to ebb and flow. RPS is fortunate to have received a significant amount of input, suggestions, and questions from the entire Ridgefield Public Schools Community. This input was taken into consideration in the development of this plan, and helped to shape its design.

RPS Reopening Committee

On June 8, 2020, Dr. Da Silva, Superintendent of Schools presented to the RPS Board of Education the framework for the newly developed RPS Reopening of Schools Committee. The purpose of the Reopening Committee is to involve stakeholders in scenario planning for the safe return of students and staff to school in August, as well as ongoing planning throughout the year. The Reopening Committee's membership is purposefully varied, including parents, community members, Ridgefield Director of Public Health, medical professionals, local elected officials, faculty, staff, administrators, and Board of Education members. The Reopening Committee was

charged with planning in seven areas, which in turn, created seven subcommittees: ***health and safety, facilities, teaching and learning, social and emotional, transportation, extracurriculars and athletics, and community relations.***

Priorities Set Forth by CSDE

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) released its reopening plan for CT, *Adapt, Advance, Achieve*, on June 29, 2020. This plan begins with priorities for all districts, which serve as the foundation of the subsequent requirements and guidance provided. The CSDE requirements included:

Plan to have all students return to school for full-time instruction, so long as public health data supports this model.	Allow for parents to choose not to participate in-person based on individual considerations.	Those students who are not attending in-person must be offered a remote learning option.	Establish contingent plans if public health data requires class cancellations, including “hybrid” and remote learning plans.
Expect all students and staff to wear protective face coverings or face masks when inside the school building, allowing for certain exceptions.	Plan for buses to operate close to capacity with heightened health and safety protocols.	Develop robust monitoring and containment protocols, and class cancellation plans, in the event that a temporary closure is again necessary.	Review building space and plan to reconfigure, if necessary.

The main tenet of the CSDE’s requirements for districts is to create three plans, depending on the state of COVID-19 spread: a “low risk” plan, a “moderate risk” plan, and a “high risk” plan. In sections to follow, you will find that low, moderate, and high risk plans are explained as they relate to instruction, health and safety protocols, facilities use, cleaning and disinfecting practices, and communication channels of COVID-19 cases within the district. For an in-depth review of the CSDE priorities and requirements, watch [RPS’ review video of the *Adapt, Advance, Achieve* plan](#).

Organization of This Document

This plan is organized by the priorities and requirements set forth by the CSDE in their aforementioned reopening plan, those which each district is obligated to plan for. The document begins with an executive summary that speaks to the broad takeaways of the plan - its anatomy. Beyond the Executive Summary, each subsequent section speaks in specific to the details and nuances of the plan. The reader will notice that within each section are the following: the CSDE requirements addressed within it; an explanation of how RPS will meet the requirements; and further

discussion to RPS-specific practices that go beyond the CSDE requirements. In addition, there is overlap among sections, and links embedded within text to reference tools or sources. At the end of the document, a Frequently Asked Question list is included to address common questions that have been posed by the community and are not explicitly answered elsewhere in the plan.

Lastly, what is included within this document are the RPS District plans. After the Board of Education has reviewed this plan, each individual school will design and communicate its specific protocols for enacting operational components of this plan, for example: arrival and dismissal patterns, daily school/classes schedule, and reconfiguring rooms and spaces.

II. LESSONS LEARNED FROM SPRING 2020

Overview

RPS is fortunate to have had a high response rate to the surveys sent to parents, staff, and students since the emergency school closure on March 13, 2020. Surveys provided an opportunity for reflection and supplied the district with needed information about what worked well during the Spring of 2020, what didn't, and most importantly - how we can continue to improve. Further, surveys were not the only method in which feedback was secured. Parents, students, faculty, and staff emailed, called, and joined meetings to encourage continuing those practices that were making a difference for children, and suggest revisions to those that could be improved upon.

1. Communication
 - On the whole, building-level communication to parents, students, and staff was strong: relevant and specific.
 - At times, there was a large volume of communication being provided to parents from teachers, school administrators, and the district, which was a lot of information for families to wade through.
 - Students could have been included more when soliciting feedback.
2. Instruction
 - Parents indicated that they preferred more “live” instruction than was offered.
 - Remote teaching and learning requires the district to think beyond “business as usual” for instructional, assessment, and engagement practices.
 - Faculty and staff desired clarity in expectations for instruction, planning, and collaborative time.
3. Access to Technology
 - Mostly all students had access to the device they needed to participate.
 - Use of Google Classroom can be streamlined across classes, grades, and schools.
 - Instructional online tools were most useful when they were easy for students to learn quickly and adapt to.
4. Social and Emotional Well-Being of Students and Faculty
 - Relationships are most important, and made all the difference for many students in maintaining engagement.
 - Social isolation impacted many students’ abilities to participate academically.
 - Staff wellness supports must be part of future planning.

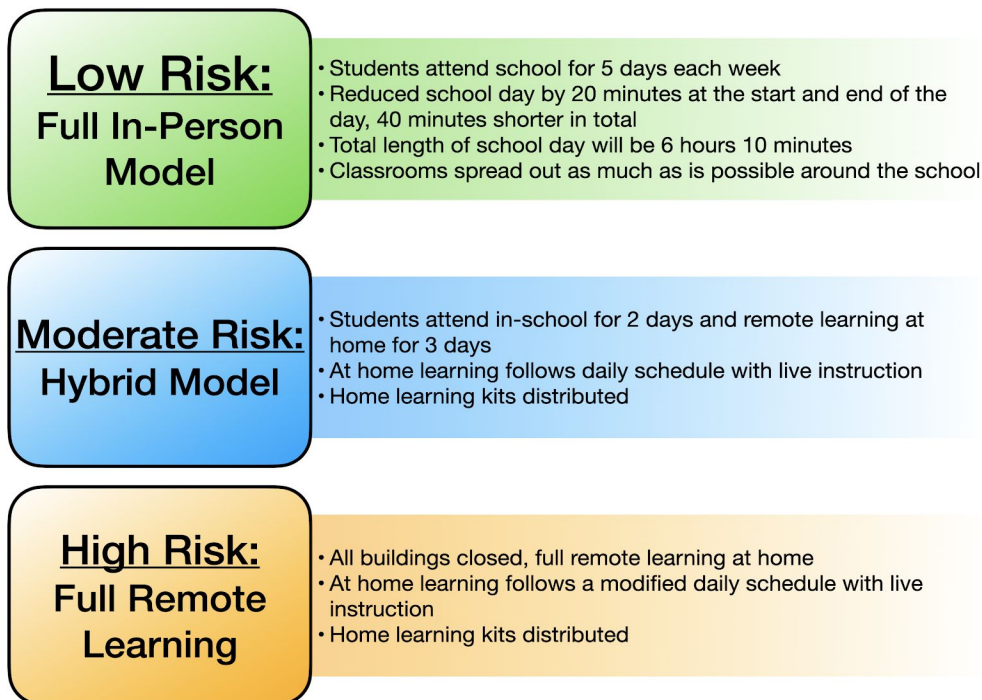
III. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF RPS REOPENING PLAN

Reopening Models

The State of Connecticut is requiring districts to create three learning models based on the local risk levels of COVID-19 spread: low, moderate, and high risk. Districts are awaiting guidance from the CSDE and the Department of Public Health regarding how to define each risk level. To be clear, a no risk model is identified when the public health risk of COVID-19 has been determined to not be significant enough to impact how schools run. In a “no risk” model, schools run as they typically did before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The “low risk” scenario relies on the ability to cohort. The elementary schools will cohort by class, and the middle schools by team. However, adequate cohorting (grouping students by the same class/group of students and teacher) is far more of a challenge at Ridgefield High School (RHS). Therefore, a hybrid model was recommended by the Superintendent for RHS in a “low risk” scenario.

On July 21, 2020, CSDE Commissioner, Dr. Miguel Cardona, provided the following [notification to all CT public school districts](#): **“Any plan submitted to the CSDE on July 24, 2020, that does not include a full reopening option as one of the three models, where all public school students have the opportunity to access school in-person five days a week, will not be in compliance with current state law regarding the number of school days, or the expectations of State leadership.”** With this said, *RPS will not be permitted to implement a hybrid model for RHS in a low risk scenario.* Below are RPS’ models for low, moderate, and high risk:



Daily Schedules

In order to ensure maximum adult supervision to minimize student congregation at arrival and dismissal, the *student's* school day will be shortened for in-person instruction by 20 minutes (each) at the start and end of the day. *This schedule will apply for both full in-person and hybrid models.*

School	Start time	End time		School	Start Time	End time
RHS/RAHS	7:45 am	1:55 pm		BES/RES/SES	8:55 am	3:05 pm
SRMS/ERMS	8:20 am	2:30 pm		VPES/BMES/FES	9:30 am	3:40 pm

Hybrid Model Weekly Schedule

The weekly schedule for the hybrid model is as follows: students will be cohorted into an “A” or “B” group by last name, and will attend school in-person two days each week, with three days at home. On Wednesdays, school buildings will be fully closed for deep cleaning and disinfection; all students will instead engage in remote learning at home. Remote learning on Wednesday’s will include a blend of [synchronous and asynchronous](#) instruction and learning activities. Classes on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday will be live [streamed](#) for students to access at home, while other students will be receiving the same instruction at school. Students who participate in the district’s Ridgefield Intensive Special Education (RISE) program will have the option of attending four days/week in person, reserving Wednesdays for remote learning only.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Group A: In-person	Group A: Remote Learning	Remote learning for all students	Group A: In-person	Group A: Remote Learning
Group B: Remote Learning	Group B: In-person		Group B: Remote Learning	Group B: In-person

Full Remote Learning Daily Schedule

If RPS is considered “high risk,” it will implement a full remote learning model; all students will remain at home to engage in digital learning remotely. This model will include a blend of [synchronous and asynchronous](#) instruction and learning activities. The day before RPS transitions to a fully remote or hybrid learning model, PreK-5 students will be provided a “Home Learning Kit” to support their digital learning experience while working remotely. Included in this kit will be helpful instructional tools that students use regularly in school during lessons and independent work time. These kits will not be needed for students in grades 6-12, as they will have all of the materials in their backpacks, carried to and from school. The daily schedule will be a modified version of the student’s in-school daily schedule, with a part of each class period taught live.

Therefore, students will have a live lesson each day per subject area/course. While ensuring consistency and establishment of routines, the amount of time for each period will be determined by: students' age/grade level and consideration of developmental expectations for younger students.

Before School Begins Parents and Students Will Have Information Regarding

- Student's daily schedule of classes/subjects for full in-person and hybrid models
- The specific arrival/dismissal protocols for their child's/children's school
- How to administer an at-home daily COVID screening
- Online training modules available
- The period structure for remote learning (how much live instruction per period, how much group or independent work)
- Which cohort each student will be in if a hybrid model has to be enacted
- How to utilize the Pre K-5 "Home Learning" kits

Temporary Remote Learning Option

The CSDE provides that parents may choose to have their child participate in temporary remote learning at home if his/her school is providing in-person instruction. This option will include daily live instruction per course or subject area. Remote learning will include a blend of synchronous and asynchronous instruction. Classes will be live [streamed](#) for students to access at home, while other students will be receiving the same instruction at school. All standard school policies and protocols apply: attendance, grading, behavior, and adherence to established special services' programs. Parents will have the option of changing their minds to begin temporary remote learning, or to return to in-person instruction in school if they've previously been participating in temporary remote learning. Parents will be required to complete a process for "enrolling" in temporary remote learning so the school can better plan to initiate this instruction in a short timeframe. In addition, parents will be required to update the school should they choose to shift from one learning model to the next. This is a critical piece in offering teachers the opportunity to plan and prepare with the least amount of disruption possible.

Training

Before School Resumes

In order for faculty, parents, students, and staff to be prepared for returning to school, a series of trainings will be made available digitally, each in a developmentally appropriate manner:

- Health and Safety Protocols at School: this is required for all staff and students, and will be made available for families
- Practicing Using Digital Platforms for Instruction
- Preparing to Return to School: Reestablishing a Routine
- A Sample Day in the Life of a Student

After School Has Begun

- Supporting Families with Transitioning to Remote Learning (if needed)
- How to Utilize PreK-5 Home Learning Kits and Digital Platforms for Instruction
- Social and Emotional Supports for Students Struggling with Disengagement

Health and Safety Protocols

The CSDE is requiring districts to adopt protocols associated with health and safety mitigation practices that are recommended by the Department of Public Health. Most specifically, these include: wearing of face masks, social distancing, cohorting, and hand washing and hygiene practices. Separately, the district will enact daily cleaning and deep cleaning protocols (separately) which will be conducted by custodial personnel. The [Health and Safety](#) section of this document will speak in specifics to our protocols.

Required Mitigating Practices

Face Masks

Face coverings are **required** per CSDE, with allowable exceptions for persons with specific medical conditions and/or disabilities.



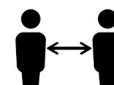
Hand Washing and Hygiene

Each classroom will be equipped with hand sanitizer, and portable hand washing stations will be positioned around the building. Teachers will promote hand washing and provide breaks as needed for it.



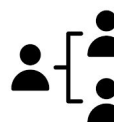
Social Distancing

Space will be utilized to the maximum extent possible, including minimizing furniture in classrooms and using all building spaces for instruction.



Cohorting

Students will stay with similar groups as much as is feasible. Students will be assigned to as few spaces in the building as possible.



School Calendar

The 2020-21 school calendar has been amended and will be discussed at the Board of Education level. If amendments are approved, staff will have additional time to learn and prepare for the school year in advance of the opening for children. This proposed change requires shifts of two staff development from November and February to two additional days in August. The 2020-21 school calendar also removes seven Early Dismissal days intended for professional learning. The reason for this shift is to allow for a reduction of the school day by 40 minutes (20 minutes at the start and 20 minutes at the end) and maintain a minimum of 900 hours of instructional minutes per school year. While the District is allowed to reduce the required number of school days to 177 by CSDE, the District is not recommending any reduction to its 181 student days at this time.

Bus Transportation

Transportation Method	No risk	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
Bus	- No restrictions - Operations resume as prior to pandemic	- Operation up to full capacity. - Bus monitors to start the year to supervise health and safety protocols - Mask or cloth face covering, - Specific loading and unloading procedures	- Reduced passenger capacity - Bus monitors to start the year to supervise health and safety protocols - Face mask - Specific loading and unloading procedures	- Full remote learning. RPS provided transportation will not be utilized

Communication Plan

Parents, students, and staff can expect three forms of communication from the school and/or district: ongoing, urgent developments, and stakeholder feedback. More than ever, two-way communication between the schools and the community is vital. RPS aims to be clear with stakeholders in not only the content of our communications, but the purpose.

Ongoing 

- Information the district is sharing with the community
- Weekly updates
- Non-urgent topics
- Will come from district and school building

Urgent 

- Vital information that has to be shared
- Will come from Superintendent via ConnectEd
- With clear, concise facts and directions

Stakeholder Feedback 

- Soliciting input from parents, staff, and students
- Intent to utilize information to improve our models and practices
- Surveys, focused groups, reopening@ridgefieldps.net

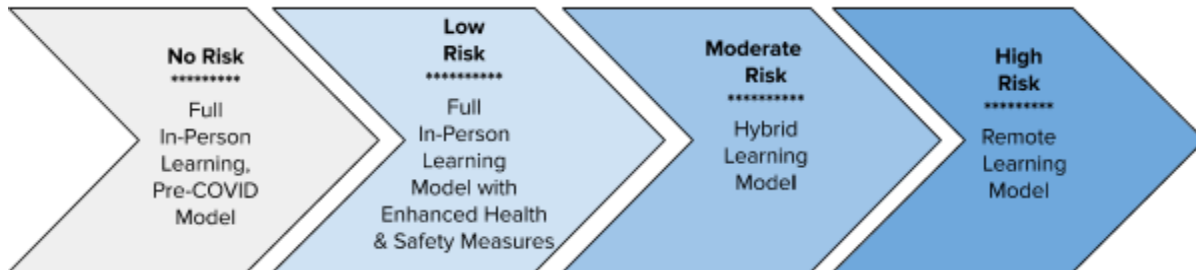
IV. REOPENING MODELS

CSDE Requirements Addressed within this Section:

- Fall Reopening Model
- Cancellation of Classes, Remote Learning, and Reopening Plans
- Facilities
- Daily Operations
- Social Distancing
- Future Planning for Remote Blended Learning
- Special Education
- English Learners
- SEL and Mental Health

Overview

The CSDE plan requires that each district create three, separate learning models, and be ready to implement each of the three at any time depending on the current public health situation. Below, these three learning models are described. Each model responds to different levels of risk:



Although there are bound to be overlaps with varying aspects of reopening schools in the fall, all models presented focus on students' (1) Student Environment and (2) Academic Experience. Each model includes details on the following subtopics found across all models, with specifics for elementary, middle and high school levels. The [Reimagining CT Classrooms](#) document was used as a guide to make recommendations for best practices for instruction, engagement, and social-emotional well-being support for students.

There are changes described in sections that follow regarding the length of the student day, design of the schedule, and how health and safety practices will be executed at each level. The facets included can be broken down into two categories, student environment and academic experience:

Student Environment

- A. Cohorting
- B. Social distancing
- C. Daily student schedules

Academic Experience

- D. Assessment
- E. Learning Models
- F. Social and Emotional Supports
- G. Cancellation of Classes, Remote Learning, and Reopening Plans
- H. Future Planning for Remote Blended Learning

Three RPS Learning Models

Low Risk: Full In-Person Model

- Students attend school for 5 days each week
- Reduced school day by 20 minutes at the start and end of the day, 40 minutes shorter in total
- Total length of school day will be 6 hours 10 minutes
- Classrooms spread out as much as is possible around the school

Low Risk: Minimal community COVID-19 spread

All Grade Levels:

- PreK-12: five full days of instruction in person at school each week
- Student's school day reduced by forty minutes to assist with safe arrival and dismissal, 20 minutes at the beginning and end of day
- Specialized instruction will be provided, as appropriate including:
 - Special education services required by the IEP for students with disabilities
 - English Language (EL) services
 - Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS) tiered intervention

Elementary School Level:

- Cohort students by classroom, specials instruction will take place in the classroom setting
- Contact with students or adults outside of the classroom is greatly reduced
- Lunch will occur in classrooms or in designated outdoor space
 - Meals will be delivered to classrooms for students who are purchasing lunch
 - One supervisory paraeducator will be assigned to one class per grade level to supervise lunch/recess
 - Recess will be with homeroom class only, and will rotate between outdoor areas

Middle School Level:

- Maintaining an 8 period day, and eliminating homeroom
- Classes/specials will be cohorted by team, except for math & special services in certain instances
- Passing time will be staggered to reduce crowding in the hallways, lunch waves will be by team

High School Level:

- ~~Students will attend school two days each week, and remote learning for three days each week. School building fully closed on Wednesdays for deep cleaning and remote learning for all students takes place~~
- ~~Remote learning will include a blend of [synchronous and asynchronous](#) instruction. Classes will be live [streamed](#) for those students to access at home, and other parts of the students' school day will be independent work time~~
- Minimize the number of classes students take per day by implementing a block schedule with 4 classes per day
- Passing time will be staggered to reduce crowding in the hallways
- ~~RHS students with special needs who participate in the Ridgefield Intensive Special Education (RISE) Program will have the option to attend in-person four days each week~~

Moderate Risk: Hybrid Model

- Students attend in-school for 2 days and remote learning at home for 3 days
- Reduced school day by 20 minutes at the start and end of the day, 40 minutes shorter in total
- At home learning follows daily schedule with live instruction
- Home learning kits distributed

Moderate Risk: Increased COVID-19 community spread

All Grade Levels:

- The Hybrid Model is the combination of [asynchronous and synchronous](#) learning activities with reduced contact
 - Students rotate in school and virtual
 - Shortened school day or week
 - Temporary full remote learning option still exists for parents
- Students will follow their daily schedule digitally and have “live” access to classroom instruction via [streaming](#) classes taking place in-school
- Teachers will leverage various systems (Google classroom, Seesaw Schoology, etc.) to convey content, engage temporary remote learners in “live” instruction and to assess students.
- PreK-5 students will receive “Home Learning Kits” to utilize during remote instruction
- Create two groups of students per school
 - Cohorts will be split in a balanced fashion
 - Will aim to provide consistency in scheduling for siblings across the district
- Students with special needs who participate in the Ridgefield Intensive Special Education (RISE) Program will have the option to attend in-person four days each week

All schools:

- Cohort A attends school in-person Mondays and Thursdays - cohort B participates virtually through "live" lessons
- Cohort B attends school in-person Tuesday & Fridays - cohort A participates virtually through "live" lessons
- Cohorts A and B engage in "live" virtual lessons on Wednesdays, allowing for disinfecting of the building

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Group A: In-person	Group A: Remote Learning	Remote learning for all students	Group A: In-person	Group A: Remote Learning
Group B: Remote Learning	Group B: In-person		Group B: Remote Learning	Group B: In-person

High Risk: Full Remote Learning

- All buildings closed, full remote learning at home
- At home learning follows a modified daily schedule with live instruction
- Home learning kits distributed

High Risk: Actively increasing COVID-19 community spread

All Grade Levels:

- Students 100% remote learning at home
- The Full Remote Model is the combination of [asynchronous and synchronous learning](#) activities
- Set schedule of “periods” of classes, each class period with “live” instruction
- Teachers and students will follow their daily (modified) schedule digitally
 - Students must be in attendance for "live" class time and appearing during that class time will no longer be optional.
 - Considerations of class length will be made based on grade/age level
- Students will follow their daily schedule digitally and have "live" access to classroom instruction
- Teachers will leverage various systems (Google classroom, Seesaw Schoology, etc.) to convey content, engage temporary remote learners in "live" instruction and to assess students
- PreK-5 students will receive “Home Learning Kits” to utilize during remote instruction
- Accommodations must be made for assessments that meet students’ needs in a digital learning environment

Daily Schedule

For in-person and hybrid models, in order to account for cohorting and social distancing, the schedule of the school day will be adjusted for elementary, middle and high school levels.

Elementary	Middle School	High School
• Students and faculty will follow the A-F day schedule. • Student school day will be reduced to a 6 hr. and 10 min. day to allow for arrival and dismissal safety protocols.	• Students will operate on an 8 period A/B schedule • Student school day will be reduced to a 6 hr. and 10 min. day to allow for arrival and dismissal safety protocols.	• Move to a block schedule, from 7 periods to 4 periods each day. • Student school day will be reduced to a 6 hr. and 10 min. Day to allow for arrival and dismissal safety protocols.

School	Start time	End time		School	Start Time	End time
RHS/RAHS	7:45 am	1:55 pm		BES/RES/SES	8:55 am	3:05 pm
SRMS/ERMS	8:20 am	2:30 pm		VPES/BMES/FES	9:30 am	3:40 pm

Consistent Factors Across All Models

What follows is a breakdown of the practices that will be implemented regardless of which of the aforementioned learning models based on the current level of risk of COVID-19 spread within the district: cohorting, social distancing, facilities use, transportation, attendance and grading, schedules, and assessment.

Cohorting

The CSDE requires that districts emphasize grouping students by the same class/group of students and teacher (into a cohort) so each team functions independently as much as possible. Placing students in cohorts is strongly encouraged for grades PreK-8, and encouraged where feasible for grades 9-12. In RPS, students will be cohorted to the extent possible to reduce the number of interactions between students in hallways, between classes, at arrival and dismissal, and during recess/lunch.

For the elementary schools, students will be cohorted by class. At East Ridge Middle School (ERMS) and Scotts Ridge Middle School (SRMS), the “team” structure allows for extended cohorting, and ERMS and SRMS will leverage this established structure by keeping students’ classes within their assigned team of teachers. Cohorting in high school is a particular challenge. Full cohorting is not going to be possible as that is defined by the same students moving as one group for the entire day. At Ridgefield High School (RHS), the change to four periods each day does not provide for cohorting, but does limit the number of passing times in the day, limits the number of students congregating in a space at one time, and reduces the number of students a staff member interacts with in one day. For K-8 students receiving special services, they may participate in small group services outside of their original cohort (with students from another cohort).

Below outlines the nuances of cohorting and health/safety mitigation efforts at each level:

Elementary	Middle School	High School
Students will be cohorted by classroom. The student's school day will begin 20 minutes later to absorb students' staggered entry. Students will go directly to their classrooms upon arrival. Students will remain in their classrooms for the majority of the day including specials. Arrival and dismissal will be staggered by bus arrival. Students will have lunch in their classrooms or outside (if feasible). Students will remain in their classroom until their bus is called for dismissal at the conclusion of the day. Twins will be placed in the same cohort outside of unique circumstances. The student's school day will end 20 minutes earlier to allow for staff to assist students immediately to their bus or "pick up" without congregating in a common space.	Students will be cohorted by "team." The first period of the day will begin 20 minutes later to absorb students' staggered entry. Students will go directly to their first class upon arrival. Cohort specific traffic patterns will be set in hallways; arrival and dismissal will be staggered to reduce interactions between students. Utilize multiple rooms for lunch waves. Students attend specials with team classmates only on virtual/in-person rotation with other team. (e.g. on A-Day, Music Elements/Orchestra Team A students arrive in person; Team B students arrive virtually and flip the following day). Twins will be placed in the same cohort outside of unique circumstances. The student's school day will end 20 minutes earlier to allow for staff to assist students immediately to their bus or "pick up" without congregating in a common space.	Cohorting by group will not be feasible. The first period of the day will begin 20 minutes later to absorb students' staggered entry. Students will go directly to their first class upon arrival. Passing time in hallways; arrival and dismissal will be staggered to reduce interactions between students. Move to an "open campus" model for students to come and go as necessary with parent permission. Students will operate on a block schedule, reducing classes from 7 periods to 4 periods a day to reduce interactions between students. The student's school day will end 20 minutes earlier to allow for staff to assist students immediately to their bus or "pick up" without congregating in a common space.

Social Distancing

The CSDE requires districts to review building space and reconfigure available classroom space, such as gymnasiums and auditoriums, to maximize social distancing, consistent with public health

guidelines in place at that time. RPS Staff will be trained on and will implement strategies to increase physical space between individuals, including modified classroom seating arrangements as well as posted material indicating 6-foot social distancing. There will be times in which social distancing can be achieved safely, and other times in which it cannot. When social distancing cannot be achieved, the use of mask wearing, limiting the sharing of materials, and frequent hand washing are critical as mitigating safety measures. See the [social distancing protocols](#) set forth in the health and safety practices section of this document.

Assessment

The focus for assessment in all models of reopening will be to gauge students' learning needs and plan for instruction to meet the needs of all learners, understanding that they are not starting the school year as typically as could be assumed in previous years. The COVID-19 school closure period in the Spring of 2020 resulted in challenges with accurately assessing student performance and mastery towards standards. RPS practices will be informed by the [Connecticut Department of Education's Sensible Assessment Practices for 2020-21 and Beyond](#) plan.

Prior to Start of School: Existing Student Data

- Use available information about returning students.
- Prioritize teacher professional learning.

At the Start of the School Year: Building Community

- Teachers build community with their new classes while delivering the first unit.
- [Formative](#) assessment practices should be implemented to gauge the impact of teaching by eliciting evidence of student learning, providing feedback, and adjusting/personalizing teaching.
- Intervention supports should be provided based on the information derived from the formative assessment practices that took place within the first six weeks of return to school. The support can be either embedded in the classroom or provided separately based on student need.

Beginning (BOY), Middle (MOY) and End of Year (EOY):

District Level Universal Screeners & Progress Monitoring Growth Assessments for Elementary

- Delay BOY NWEA [growth assessment](#) until end of October 2020 (except for Kindergarten Literacy Battery).
- Omit MOY NWEA progress monitoring.
- Complete EOY NWEA growth assessment after [summative State assessment](#).

Midterms and Finals for 9-12

- Depending on the learning model (low, moderate, or high risk) that is implemented in the first and second semester, RHS will determine if typical midterms and finals can be administered.
- If typical midterms and finals cannot be administered, RHS will consider using guidelines for assessment implemented during the school closure period in the Spring of 2020.

End of Year State Summative Assessments for K-8

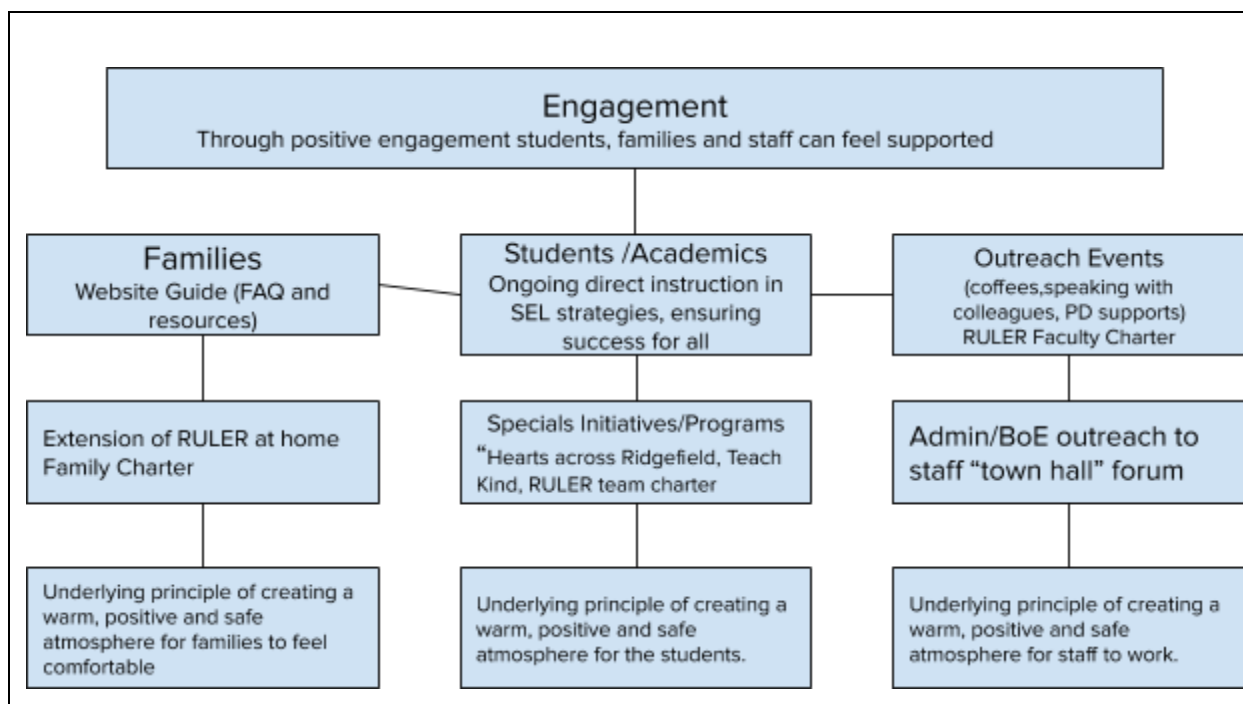
Engage in summative [standardized](#) assessments (SBA, NGSS, CTAS, CTSS) to evaluate overall achievement on the state standards

Social and Emotional Supports

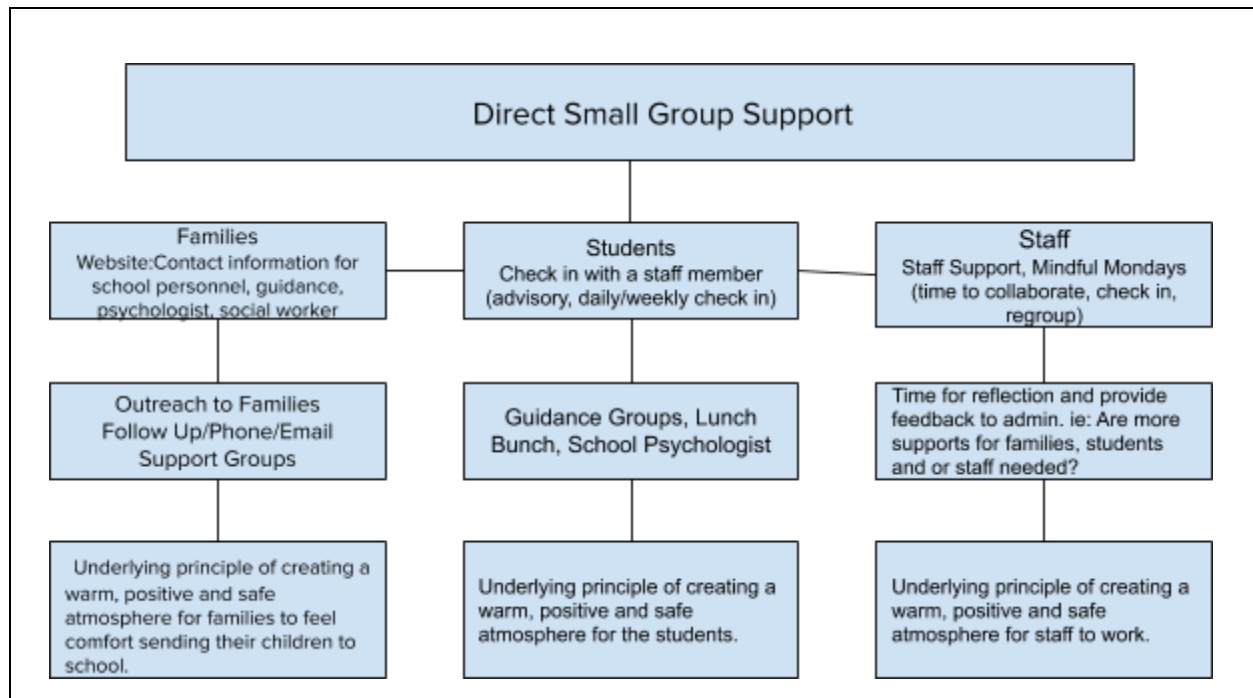
As important as it is to support students to get back to academic instruction, RPS recognizes that it is equally as important to support their social-emotional well-being as they return to school. Students had a variety of responses to the school closure during the Spring of 2020, and similarly have varied feelings about returning to school. We are committed to meet students “where they are” and make available the social-emotional supports that can assist them in being available and engaged in their class instruction, social interactions with peers, and coping with what could be more unexpected changes throughout the 2020-2021 school year. The RPS social-emotional supports described are broken down into three levels: Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3. Tier 1 supports are considered the least intensive, and Tier 3 the most intensive.

Tier 1 supports for all students, staff, families

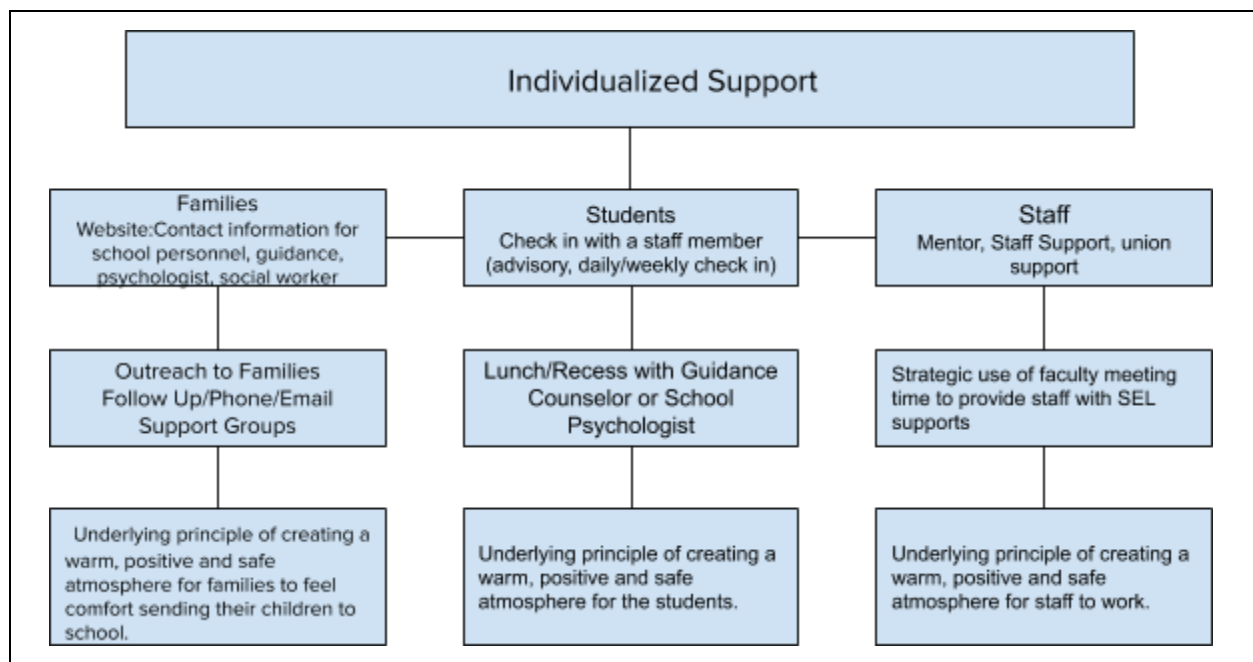
These supports are good for all students and can be embedded into daily instruction



Tier 2 supports for students, staff, families



Tier 3 supports for students, staff, families



Special Services

For students who receive special services, they will continue to have access to these services regardless of the learning model that is implemented at any given time. Distance learning in the Spring of 2020 posed many challenges for all students, but in particular those who require special services in order to access their general education experience as much as is appropriate for each individual child. Cohorting is going to be difficult for students with special services, as they often receive services together with students from other classes and sometimes other grades. Schools will be thinking creatively about the spaces used for services in order to maximize distancing and cohorting, while ensuring fidelity of services provided.

Students Receiving Special Education Services and 504 Services

Students who receive services via an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan are general education students first, and all facets of this plan apply to their day-to-day experience. Separately, service providers will communicate with parents and students specifics regarding how their IEP or 504 services will be provided within each of the three learning models (full in-person, hybrid, and full remote). Many students with special needs experienced difficulties with accessing remote instruction virtually during the Spring of 2020. If a [hybrid model](#) is implemented, the district will explore whether or not it can provide for increased access to in-person services for students with IEPs while maintaining all health and safety requirements.

Students Receiving English Learner Services and Intervention (MTSS) Services

Services for English Learners and Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS) Intervention services will be provided to students eligible for such regardless of the learning model implemented at any time. The design of these services will be determined on an individualized basis, understanding that balancing access to these services and students' general education participation is one that must be made with parent input.

Terminology

Term	Description
Live Streaming	Viewing a class taking place live in a classroom in the school via a digital platform
Synchronous	Online learning that happens in real-time
Asynchronous	Online learning that occurs without real-time interactions
Cohort	A group of individuals (students and staff) who stay together throughout the duration of the school day

Remote Learning	A type of learning that occurs keeping students and teachers connected while working in separate places
Formative Assessment	Process used to evaluate student learning during an instructional unit and guides adjustments to ongoing teaching and learning
Summative Assessment	Assessment used to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit
Progress Monitoring/Growth Assessment	Assessment used to assess student academic progress toward a goal and determine how students are responding to instruction
Standardized Tests	A method of assessment built on the principle of consistency: all test takers are required to answer the same questions and all answers are graded in the same, predetermined way. Often given to large groups of students to compare progress at the student, cohort, or school-level. Examples of standardized tests include SBA, NGSS, CTAS, CTSS, SAT/ACT, PSAT, AP Exam

V. HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES

CSDE Requirements Addressed within this Section:

- COVID Health and Safety Compliance Liaison
- Facilities - Operation Plan
- Health Monitoring Plan
- Reporting Illness and Addressing Vulnerable Populations
- Containment Plan
- Transportation
- Health and Safety Practices and Protocols
- Use of Face Covering, Face Masks and Face Shields
- Social Distancing
- Hand Washing/Hand Sanitizing
- Planning and Distributing of Information

Overview

The Ridgefield Public Schools will follow Federal, State and Local laws as well as guidelines from the CDC and the Connecticut Department of Public Health to plan for the safe return of students and staff to school. The following section outlines the district's health and safety practices in use, design and learning of facilities, health and safety practices and protocols such to reduce transmission of COVID, and monitoring of symptoms and response to confirmed cases. Education and training for students and staff is an essential component to this plan.

Facilities and Operations Protocols

[RPS Facilities and Operations Protocols for the Reopening](#) details the practices for the cleaning, disinfecting, and maintenance of RPS facilities specific to COVID-19. Included within these protocols are ventilation protocols, and social distancing and staff/student movement patterns.

COVID-19 Health and Safety Compliance Liaison

The Ridgefield Public Schools' School Nurse Coordinator is the designated COVID-19 Health and Safety Compliance Liaison. The COVID-19 Health and Safety Compliance Liaison is responsible for answering questions and communicating about health and safety requirements related to COVID-19. Roles and Responsibilities of the Health and Safety Compliance Liaison include:

1. Communication Plan - regularly update the school community health and safety protocols and update the school community of COVID-19 response.
2. Develop age appropriate training for all students, staff and substitutes on public health topics to reduce the spread of disease.
3. Develop a system of cohort tracking to respond to confirmed cases of COVID-19.

While maintaining adherence with federal HIPAA and FERPA laws:

- State and local health officials will actively monitor COVID-19 spread rates.

- School Nurses and the RPS Nurse Coordinator will track and compile data regarding the reported COVID-19 symptoms in students and staff.

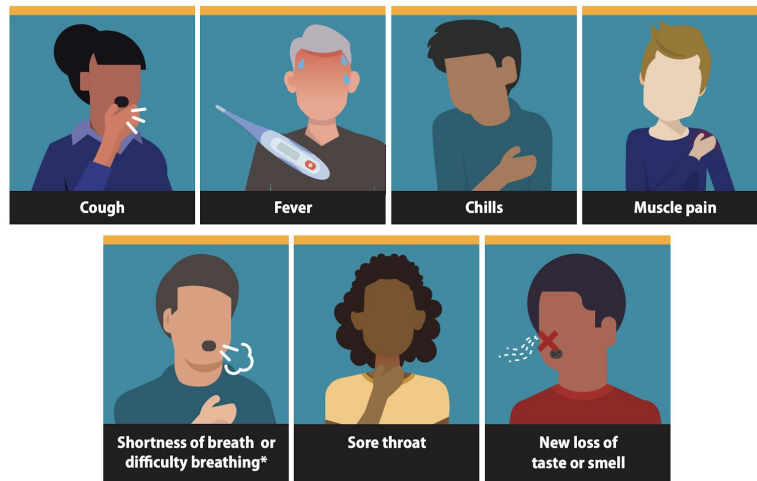


Health Monitoring and Containment Plan

Proper monitoring of symptoms and containment of illness is critical to ensure the health and safety of students and staff. The Ridgefield Public Schools have established the following Health and Monitoring and Containment Plan. This plan will be regularly communicated to the school community and revised as CDC Guidelines are updated. This plan includes: (a) monitoring of symptoms prior to reporting to school or work and during the school day, (b) attendance monitoring, and (c) containment plan details.

A. MONITORING OF SYMPTOMS

Know the symptoms of COVID-19, which can include the following:



Prior to Reporting to School or Work:

All staff members and students (conducted by parent/guardian or by student) must self monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 prior to leaving their home to report to school and work.

Symptoms to monitor or include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Any staff member or student who exhibits any of these symptoms of COVID-19, must not report to work or school and must contact their medical provider. Staff members or students must contact the school nurse in their building or the School Nurse Coordinator if there is not a nurse in their work location.

During the School and Work Day:

During the school day any staff member or student with any symptoms of COVID (listed above) should report to the school nurse, they will be moved to the designated containment room and dismissed from school. All persons who enter the designated containment room should be logged.

A doctor's note will be required to return to school or work, additionally RPS will follow CDC guidance for return to school or work. Current CDC guidance is that a person who thinks or knows they have COVID-19 may not return to school until it has been at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared and they have been symptom free for at least 3 days. It is important to remember that anyone who has close contact with someone with COVID-19 should stay home for 14 days after exposure based on the time it takes to develop illness.

Attendance Monitoring

Reporting of student attendance will follow the district's established practices. Reporting of attendance will be monitored daily by school staff. If a student is absent and the reason is unknown, the district will contact the parent/guardian. Each school will report its daily absence rates to the COVID-19 Health and Safety Compliance Liaison for monitoring of school and district trends. Reporting of staff attendance will follow the district's established practices. Daily monitoring of staff attendance will occur.

Containment Plan

Establish an containment room in each school building. These rooms shall be staffed with a trained school employee wearing PPE. Rooms will be properly ventilated or have an appropriate air filter. School nurses will notify their principal and the nursing coordinator of any student or staff exhibiting signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or with known exposure to COVID-19 or a positive COVID-19 test. The nursing coordinator will alert the RPS medical advisor and the town of Ridgefield Director of Public Health. The response team will consist of the school nurse, the nursing coordinator and building administrators and school mental health professionals.

If any person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 has been present in school the local health department must be notified immediately. Communication about a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the school building will be immediately sent to parents. Next, the school building will be cleaned and disinfected per CDC guidelines after any confirmed case of COVID-19.

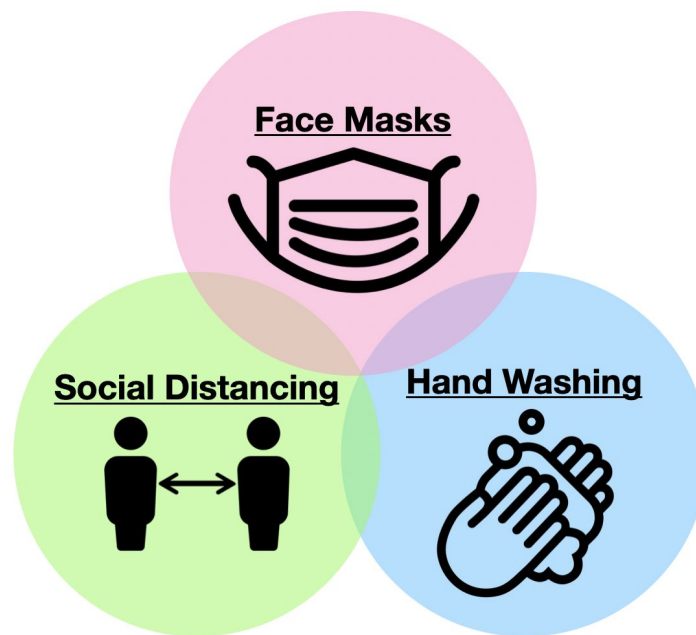
Students and staff will be able to return to school when the following conditions for re-admittance have been met:

- 3 days with no symptoms of COVID-19 without use of fever-reducing medications
- AND 10 days have passed since the first occurrence of symptoms.

For a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 in a member of the school community:

- At least 10 days have passed since the positive result in the diagnostic test and no symptoms for at least 3 days.

Health and Safety Practices and Protocols



The school community will be educated on public health practices to reduce transmission of COVID. The COVID Health and Safety Compliance Liaison will develop age appropriate online training and signage for the buildings that include the following topics:

- Social Distancing
- Use of Face Coverings
- Frequent Hand Washing
- Respiratory and Coughing Etiquette
- Cleaning Protocols

Staff members: Mandatory training of all staff members will occur in August 2020 prior to the opening of school. Attendance will be collected and a staff member may not work until such training has been completed. On the first day of school, all students will be educated in an age appropriate level of these public health practices and district expectations.

All substitutes must complete the required training prior to being employed in a substitute position. Upon hire, all new employees must complete the online training prior to reporting to work. The online training will be on the Ridgefield Public Schools' website for access by parents and the community.

The following Health and Safety Protocols have been established by the Ridgefield Public Schools. These protocols are in adherence to all Federal, State and Local health guidelines.

Face Coverings, Face Masks, and Face Shields

Students: Students must wear a face mask/face coverings that completely cover their nose and mouth during the following time:

- Prior to getting on the bus and during the entire length of the bus ride to and from school. Masks will be provided to any student who does not have one prior to getting on the bus.
- Prior to eating at the school building. Masks will be available at the school for any student who does not have one.
- During the school day except during designated times such as outside when social distancing can be achieved.

Staff Members: Staff members must wear a face mask/face coverings that completely cover the nose and mouth during the following times:

- Prior to entering the school building. Masks will be provided to any staff member who does not have one.
- While navigating the building outside of their personal work space.

Visitors: Visitors will be prohibited in the buildings except in emergency situations. Any visitor who is permitted access to the building must completely cover their nose and mouth during the following times:

- Prior to entering the school building. Masks will be provided to visitors who do not have them.
- Masks must be worn at all times visitors are in the school buildings.

Exceptions to Use of Face Coverings:

- For anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- For anyone who has a medical reason making it unsafe to wear a face covering.

Hand Washing and Hand Sanitizing

Students: Students must hand wash or use hand sanitizer during the following times.

- Prior to entering the classroom students must use hand sanitizer located at the classroom door.
- Prior to eating snacks or lunch.

- Prior to exiting the building for recess and returning to the building (if applicable).
- Prior to dismissal.

Staff Members:

- Staff members must frequently hand wash and/or use hand sanitizer.
- Prior to entering a classroom, staff members must use hand sanitizer.

Visitors:

- Visitors will be prohibited from entry into the school building, unless given access for emergency purposes.
- Hand sanitizer will be available at the entrance to the building and in the main office.
- Visitors will be encouraged to use hand sanitizer.

Social Distancing

All staff members and students shall practice social distancing when feasible. Social distancing is defined as being at least six feet apart from others. Classroom layouts will be reconfigured to separate student desks to the extent possible. As respiratory droplets can be produced during instruction, the teacher is to remain socially distant while wearing a mask or face covering.

Where feasible, a [cohorting learning model](#) will be implemented to limit social contact between students.

Transportation

RPS will provide transportation to all learners. However, per CSDE recommendations, the model of transportation will vary depending on the current status of COVID-19 spread. Please use the following chart as an overview of the RPS Transportation models:

Transportation Method	No risk	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
Bus	- No restrictions - Operations resume as prior to pandemic	- Operation up to full capacity - Bus monitors to start the year to supervise health and safety protocols - Face mask - Specific loading and unloading procedures	-Reduced passenger capacity - Bus monitors to start the year to supervise health and safety protocols -Face mask -Specific loading and unloading procedures	-Full remote learning. RPS provided transportation will not be utilized

Transportation Method	No risk	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
Parent Transport	- No restrictions - Operations resume as prior to pandemic	- Restrictions in place regarding drop-off and pick-up - Cannot exit vehicle - Revised traffic patterns	- Restrictions in place regarding drop-off and pick-up - Cannot exit vehicle - Revised traffic patterns	Transportation will not be utilized

Student arrival time for each building will be staggered over a 20-minute window of time. Each building will communicate the arrival and departure window of time for busses. They will also indicate the permissible arrival time for students using parent provided transportation. For specific details regarding guidelines for bussing and alternative transportation (including parent drop-off) please see the [RPS Transportation document here](#).

Addressing Vulnerable Populations

The school nurse will maintain information regarding those students and staff members who are considered “vulnerable” and are considered “high risk” based on the [guidance from the Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#). It is critical that parents provide the most up-to-date medical information from the student’s treating physician regarding the child’s medical needs and recommendations. RPS will review attendance policies for students and staff to ensure that coming to school or work while ill is not incentivized.

RPS staff members are encouraged to discuss any medical concerns with their healthcare provider to assess their personal risk working in the educational environment. If any modifications or accommodations to an employee’s workday are required, a meeting should be arranged with the employee’s direct supervisor.

“Stay Home” Communications

RPS expects employees and students to “stay home” if:

- They are exhibiting [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 (e.g. fever and cough)
- They have been in [close contact](#) with a person diagnosed with COVID-19

VI. PARENT REQUEST FOR TEMPORARY REMOTE LEARNING OPTION

CSDE Requirements Addressed Within this Section:

- Temporarily Choosing Not to Participate

Overview

The CSDE requirements allow for parents to choose to temporarily not have their children participate in the live physical learning models provided by RPS. The following section provides guidance regarding:

- Definition of “Temporary Remote Learning” vs. “Full Remote Learning”
- Temporary remote learning options/models
- Procedures to notify the school/district that you are temporarily choosing for your child to not participate in the physical learning environment

Definitions

Below are definitions of the various learning models that students may experience during the school year, depending on state, local and regional COVID-19 levels. For further explanation of the RPS models, see the [Risk Levels: Three RPS Models](#).

Temporary Remote Learning

- Regardless of the model RPS is utilizing at any given time, parents can choose to temporarily have their child/children engage in a remote learning model.
- Parents will need to notify their school and the district of this decision.
- Students will be required to engage regularly in a virtual learning environment.
- Temporary Remote Learning *may not look exactly the same as the [Full Remote Learning Model](#) the district would enact if in the “high risk” learning model.*

Full Remote Learning

- All RPS students will be engaging in learning through a virtual model ONLY.
- Those students who have been in a “temporary remote learning” model will continue to engage in virtual learning.

RPS Temporary Remote Learning Option Model

Students Access to Education

Parents will have the option for their child/children to engage in remote learning within one of the [three reopening models](#). In a temporary remote learning environment, students will only be accessing their education virtually. Students will be expected to:

- Attend virtual classes "live" when scheduled during the school day, on a daily basis
- Engage in virtual interaction with peers and instructors
- Submit all work in a timely manner

Students will follow their daily schedule digitally and have "live" access to classroom instruction. Teachers will leverage various systems (Google classroom, Seesaw, Schoology, etc.) to convey content, engage temporary remote learners in "live" instruction and to assess students. The specifics of the learning model will vary by level. Accommodations will be made for assessments that meet students' needs in a digital learning environment. At times, RHS students may be offered to take a course via a third party online platform.

For students participating in remote learning:

- RPS Chromebooks are available for all learners K-12
- If using a personal device, the following are required features:
 - Internet accessible device with full keyboard
 - Front facing camera (or Webcam)
 - Microphone (built-in or external)
- Need to utilize their RPS Email account
- The same attendance [expectations](#) will apply, along with class rules for participation, work submission, and behavior
- Are not allowed to record any lessons without permission of the teacher and principal

Notification to the District

Parents will be required to submit a Google Form if they wish for their child to participate in temporary remote learning. They will receive an email confirmation after submission from their child's school indicating their choice.

Deadlines/Timeline:

Due to the dynamic nature of this situation, RPS understands that new information may shift a family's thinking in one direction or another. For this reason, the district is not setting a deadline for making a decision to temporarily have their child/children engage in remote learning.

VII. PREPARING FOR FUTURE SHUTDOWNS

CSDE Requirements Addressed within this Section:

- Reporting illness and addressing vulnerable populations
- Planning and Distribution of Information
- Containment Plan
- Cancellation of Classes, Remote Learning, and Reopening Plans

Overview

Depending on the trajectory of local, state, and regional COVID-19 infection rates, the district, in consultation with local and state health officials, may determine that all students be required to shift into a full remote learning model. This section will outline the RPS plans to prepare for incidents of singular and rising COVID-19 infections. This will include:

- Cancellation of classes- shifting to full remote learning
- Department of Public Health criteria
- Reopening plans in a post-closure scenario

For a review of procedures for monitoring staff and student illness, containment planning, and communication strategies, refer to the [Health and Safety Practices](#) section of this document.

Cancellation of Classes; Shifting to Full Remote Learning

District administration, in coordination with the Ridgefield Department of Public Health, will consistently monitor COVID-19 levels and spread, and in-the-moment decisions will be made based on current data. Once the district's risk level is assessed, the Ridgefield Department of Public Health with RPS will make a determination whether it is safe to return to the school buildings. If it is not safe to return, the district will invoke temporary closure for a period of time until the risk level reduces, and continue a full remote learning model. Communication of any changes to the instructional day due to increased risk level will include:

- Direct contact with those directly affected
- ConnectEd message via email and/or text
- General contact for all community members
- Notification to the Town of Ridgefield Community via social media, news media, and other Town communication sources
- Follow-up communication from the Superintendent's office regularly until the risk level changes and a less restrictive learning model can be implemented

Reopening Plans in a Post-Closure Scenario

In the event that the district has to enact a full school closure during the 2020-21 academic year, the RPS community will be notified of the learning models (full, in-person, or hybrid) and all associated schedules when RPS eventually reopens. As faculty and students return to the district, all health and safety, facilities and operations, and learning protocols will be re-initiated. If new protocols are designed as a result of the closure, the school community will be notified and provided training on how to comply with them.

Additional Resources

[Harvard: Schools for Health, Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening](#)

[Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together](#)

[CDC: Quarantine if you might be sick](#)

VIII. SUPPORTS FOR STAKEHOLDERS

CSDE Requirements Addressed Within this Section:

- **Facilities (training requirement)**
- Staff and Student Health protocols training
- Child Nutrition
- Family Support and Communication
- Certification and Personnel Planning
- Professional Development

Overview

As the district prepares for reopening schools, we recognize there are additional considerations that must be addressed to ensure students, families, and staff are well supported as we prepare to return to school.

In this section you will find descriptions of various components related to the reopening, considerations by the committees, relevant background information, and rationales.

RPS Practices Across All Reopening Models

Health and Safety Compliance Liaison: The RPS designated district employee who will answer questions regarding district health and safety protocols is Aaron Crook, School Nursing Coordinator, at acrook@ridgefieldps.net or (203) 894-5800, x9004.

Supports for Staff: The RPS Reopening Plan will strive to ensure that all staff have the resources to feel safe and confident returning to the workplace. Staff and student health training protocols can be found [here](#). Staff will engage in professional development on health and safety protocols and remote learning digital tools to support instruction. All staff will have clear open communication paths to support staff concerns and collaborate with administration to improve outcomes. Staff will have HR support to access emergency leave, Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), and other related benefits; and use of the CDC health inventory as it pertains to employees who may need accommodations.

Personal Protective Equipment: RPS will ensure staff have the necessary personal protective resources, as appropriate for their risk exposure, such as masks, gloves, gowns, face shields, etc.

Cleaning Protocols: RPS will clean and sanitize all classrooms and staff rooms according to CDC recommendations.

Professional Development: RPS will run virtual and in-person professional development before schools reopen. RPS will provide staff with the information, guidance, and professional learning necessary to support virtual instructional practices, health, and safety. The district's Professional Development Calendar will be organized in a manner that prioritizes the health and safety

protocols required for reopening schools along with the technological and instructional resources required for all three models.

Family Support and Communication: RPS will ensure that all families have the tools, resources, and supports to feel safe and comfortable as their children return to school. Elements of this family support and communication model include the following:

- **Social Emotional Support:** RPS will identify resources available to families and stakeholders. Click the link [here](#) to see the RPS list of Resources for Families and Stakeholders.
- **Reintegration Support:** RPS will provide ongoing social, emotional and academic support when students return from temporary remote learning to in-person participation in school.
- **Child Nutrition:** RPS will continue to provide meal services to students unable to attend school in person.
- **Technology Support:** RPS will provide multiple layers of technology support to students and parents.
 - First- an online Help Desk accessible via email to support students and caregivers with computer troubleshooting in a timely manner. This will include device and software support.
 - Second- the RPS [elearning hub](#), located on the district's website, will continue to be updated with training resources for all stakeholders.
 - Third- Chromebook devices will be available for students who require one for remote learning. Families should contact Craig Creller, Assistant Superintendent, at [ccreller@ridgefieldps.net](mailto:crcreller@ridgefieldps.net).

IX. EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND ATHLETICS

CSDE Requirements Addressed within this Section:

- Daily Operations
- Social Distancing
- After School Programming

Overview

RPS students are well-rounded and very active in extracurricular activities and athletics. The Town of Ridgefield values student leadership, creativity, teamwork, and sportsmanship. RPS extracurricular offerings enhance the overall student experience and child development. For many students, extracurriculars and athletics are a large part of their school experiences. Students benefit from the social, emotional and physical benefits these activities provide.

Extracurricular Activities: RPS Practices Across All Reopening Models

Extracurricular activities, for the purpose of this document, refers to school-sponsored clubs and events. Depending on the [learning model](#) implemented based on the COVID-19 risk level, school-sponsored clubs will run in different ways.

- In a “low risk” scenario, clubs will run and participants must adhere to [health and safety practices](#) set forth. This includes following specific social distancing and face covering guidelines.
 - Club advisors are required to utilize the [RPS Extracurricular Activities Decision Tree](#) to determine the safest way to facilitate their clubs’ meetings to ensure student safety.
- In a “moderate risk” scenario (hybrid model), indoor club meetings will be suspended. Clubs will only meet outdoors and/or virtually.
- In a “high risk” scenario, clubs are only to meet virtually.

Ridgefield High School Athletics

RHS interscholastic athletics teams compete within the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletics Conference (CIAC). All RHS athletic teams will follow the CIAC [Resocialization Guidelines](#).

CIAC officials have indicated that they will take district plans submitted to the state into consideration when developing plans for the fall interscholastic sports season. Play may be restricted to geographic areas or within individual leagues to limit potential spread. Within the Fairfield County Interscholastic Conference (FCIAC), alternative plans at the sub-varsity level are being developed in the event that traditional scheduling is not feasible due to transportation limitations, etc. A “jamboree” model is being explored for weekend-only play in several freshmen sports. As more information becomes available, it will be shared with the RPS community.

The “worst-case scenario” of the CIAC cancelling the fall season will not preclude RHS from offering in-house sports alternatives such as intramurals. These alternate possibilities are being explored as a “last resort” option to allow students to participate in athletics.

School Events and Outside Visitors

Outside visitors will be prohibited in the school buildings outside of an emergency, and therefore extracurricular events will have to run differently than they typically do. More specifically and not limited to: musical and dramatic performance, art shows, student volunteer events, and the like will not be able to run in the school buildings after hours. In some cases, these events may run outdoors while following [health and safety protocols](#) for staff, students and parents, or they may run virtually.

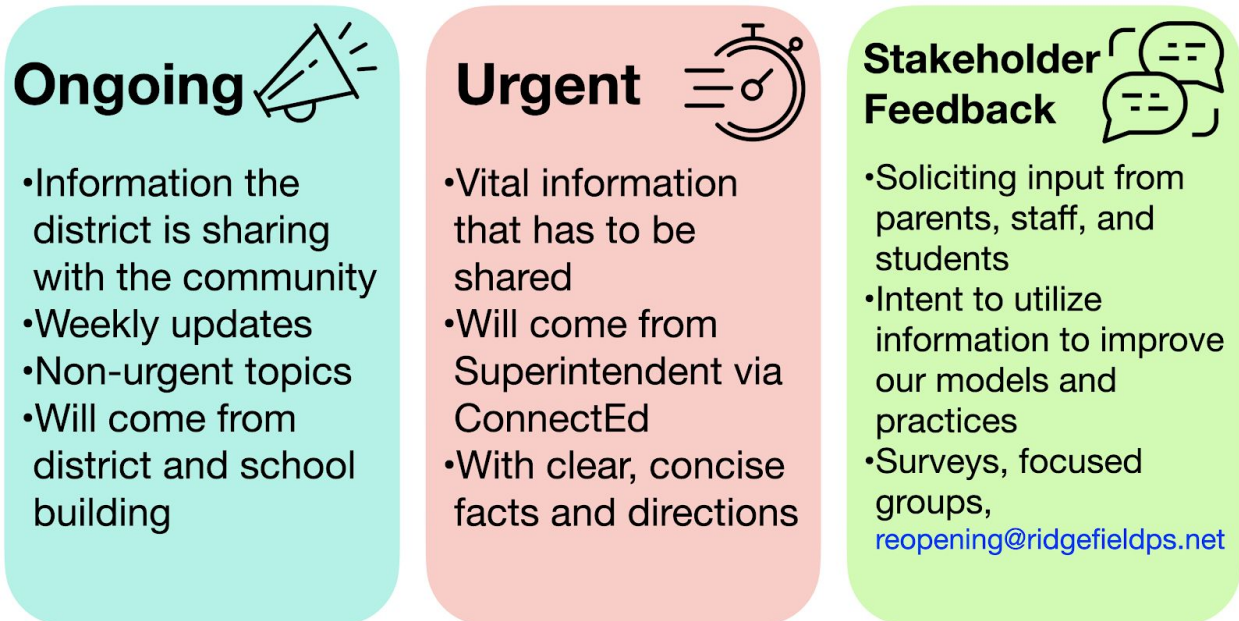
X. COMMUNICATION PLAN

CSDE Requirements Addressed within this Section:

- Communications Plans, and Data Collection
- Planning and Distribution of Information
- Family Support and Communication

Overview

In the introduction to this document, it was stated that the RPS Reopening approach needs to be built with inherent flexibility, with the understanding that the COVID-19 public health situation will continue to evolve over the coming months. During what will likely be a trying time for the Ridgefield Community, RPS commits to engaging in proactive, clear, and two-way communication regarding its plans to safely educate its students. To this end, a multi-faceted communications plan will be enacted, taking into account several RPS audiences- parents, faculty and staff, students, and community members. This communication plan has three components: (1) ongoing communication, (2) urgent developments and, (3) stakeholder feedback. Communications will be made available in all languages spoken within the district.



Ongoing Communication

Throughout this school year until Ridgefield is in a “no risk” public health situation, the district will send out weekly updates to the school community and Town of Ridgefield regarding the current learning model, rates of COVID-19 spread within the schools, and useful information about upcoming changes, training, notices, etc. When advance timing is available, the district will inform the community of changes that are planned and what steps and timing to expect next. In addition, the Superintendent will provide live reopening updates at each Board of Education

meeting. Ongoing communications will be shared via email to parents, staff and (when appropriate) students through RPS social media platforms, and through the local press.

Urgent Developments

In moments of emergency, it is important that communications be clear and consistent, and to that end, the Superintendent will provide RPS-specific statements when there are urgent developments related to the COVID-19 situation. Similar to the district's emergency notification system and protocols, the district will notify parents and staff immediately in the event that there is a confirmed COVID-19 case within one of the schools. Communication will come out from the Superintendent's office after coordination with the local Department of Public Health. This communication will provide specifics regarding the immediate steps the district will take within the first 72 hours; what parents and students can expect instructionally for the next day; the current "risk" level within the district; and when to expect to hear next from the Superintendent.

Stakeholder Feedback

Ridgefield parents, students, RPS faculty and staff, and community members have actively provided input towards reopening planning efforts, and these communications have been helpful. Prior to and during the reopening, all stakeholders are encouraged to provide feedback on the district-wide plans through multiple avenues:

- Surveys will continue to be distributed to learn parent, student, and staff experiences, and how the RPS plan is working.
- Stakeholders may continue to send emails to reopening@ridgfieldps.net with questions about the district-wide plans and protocols.
- Specific questions about individual school protocols may be sent to the school's principal.
- Opportunities will be provided for community conversations- small group and large group town hall meetings to discuss future RPS plans, and listen to stakeholder questions and suggestions.
- The Reopening Committee will continue to meet during the 2020-21 school year, and committee members will supply insight into how the RPS plan is working for students of all ages, faculty and staff, parents, and the larger Ridgefield community.

Who to Contact When

- When parents are reporting illness to the school, they will contact their school nurse.
- When parents have questions about the district's health and safety protocols, they will contact the RPS COVID Health and Safety Compliance Liaison, Aaron Crook (District School Nursing Coordinator) at acrook@ridgfieldps.net.

XI. TIMELINES FOR KEY DECISIONS

CSDE Requirements Addressed within this Section:

- **Communications Plans**

Overview

All decisions will be led by the RPS Superintendent of Schools, the Department of Public Health, and the Ridgefield Board of Education. Decisions will be based on the most recent public health data and guidance from the CDC as well as state and town health departments. RPS will continue to utilize a series of methods for collecting information from parents, students, faculty and staff about the design and implementation of this plan, including but not limited to surveys; emails sent to reopening@ridgefieldps.net; discussion at public meetings; and school and district-wide meetings on specific topics. The RPS Reopening Committee will continue to gather and process information about community needs and the best available approach for serving our students, families, and staff under difficult and evolving circumstances in a timely manner. The RPS communications plan can be found [here](#).

By July 24-

RPS will submit a Reopening Plan to the state by July 24th 2020. The RPS Reopening Plan will be available to the public on the main page of the district's website: www.ridgefield.org.

By August 14-

Parents are asked to notify their respective schools if they are choosing the temporary remote learning option for their child. Families that initially choose a flexible model for their children are required to give their home school five-days notice if they decide to change from remote or live and vice versa.

By August 14-

Parents will receive notification of specific school-based processes and protocols that include student's schedules; expected protocols for attendance; engagement; safety; and arrival and dismissal protocols.

By August 17-

A plan for RPS district technology (e.g. devices) and remote learning technology training resources will be posted on the RPS website with specific instructions.

August 19-

All teachers will return to the district for professional learning specific to the reopening of schools, pending BOE review of district calendar revisions.

August 27-

First day of school for K-9th grade students.

August 28-

First day of school for 10-12th grade students.

September 3rd

First day of school for PreK.

XII. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Included within this section are questions that are not already addressed elsewhere in this document.

Topic	FAQs	Answer
Face Masks	How important are masks?	Masks are vital. They are the best defense that we have.
	Are face shields acceptable without masks?	No, face shields are not acceptable in place of a mask.
	Can teachers remove face masks if they are over six feet away from students and teachers are still wearing a face shield?	Only with proper social distancing and remaining behind a physical barrier like a face shield or plexiglass.
	Can teachers remove face masks if they are over six feet away from students and sitting behind a plexiglass divider?	Yes.
	Are clear face masks acceptable (not a face shield, a clear face mask) for staff? for students?	We would need to look at the specific mask to evaluate it. Feel free to contact your school nurse if you question your mask and would like it assessed.
	What are the allowable exceptions to wearing a mask?	If you have trouble breathing; if you have trouble removing the face mask if you were to experience distress; and any other medical reason that would make wearing the mask unsafe.
	Are there risks with students wearing masks all day with minimal breaks from them? What about breathing in carbon dioxide?	Wearing a mask does not prevent the proper exchange of carbon dioxide and oxygen in the lungs. People cannot retain carbon dioxide by wearing a mask.
	Are masks effective for our youngest children given how much they will touch, move, and drop them?	If you are touching your face or mask, it won't change the effectiveness of the mask itself. Keeping the mask on will allow as much benefit from the mask as possible. We would expect older children to wear the mask and keep them on all day. There will be mask breaks.

	Can kids or staff take mask breaks if they are more than six feet away from one another and inside the school building?	Yes, while eating or drinking or during Physical Education (PE) or being outdoors <i>AND</i> while practicing social distancing.
	Do students/staff have to wear a face mask if they are outside and closer than six feet?	Yes.
Reopening Models	Can families change their mind whenever they want about the enrollment status of their child- for example switching from distance learning to in-person learning after two weeks?	Yes. RPS will create a process in which parents will inform the school of their choice (and choice change). On the instructional side, we hope to partner to limit the disruption to the classroom.
	Can you please explain how you plan to improve distance learning methods if we are required to close schools? Will there be more live instruction than this past spring?	Yes. We are planning for more live instruction, as it was clear from our surveys that increasing the amount of live instruction is essential for the purposes of student accountability, engagement and interaction with their peers. We are in the process of reviewing platforms that could support all of our students, specifically our youngest children.
	Can the district create classes of 10 students and run in-person for the full five-day week?	Unfortunately, no. At this time we don't have the space. We can't create and use alternative spaces as they won't meet the requirements to qualify as a school setting. In addition, splitting all classes in half would mean hiring double the amount of teachers. Financially, it's not realistic.
	Will you be taking temperatures daily of staff and students?	Because of the opportunity for false positives, in accordance with health guidance, we will not require temperature checks of students and staff. Instead, we will require that all faculty and staff monitor their own health, and we request that families also monitor their children's health before sending them to school.
	Will parents have an option for hybrid in a low risk model, just like they can choose remote learning?	Parents will have the option for a remote learning model (100%) or in-person instruction, not a hybrid model
	Students have been affected	We will be training our mental health providers,

	socially and emotionally during the closure this spring. How will you help them upon return?	or pupil personnel staff, to be prepared to support students upon return. This includes our social workers, school psychologists, and school counselors. With that said, all adults with students must be prepared to support students socially and emotionally. In some cases, a mental health provider may not be the right person to support a student, it may be another adult who that student has a relationship with: a nurse, an administrator, a teacher, a paraeducator. Our mental health providers will support teachers with this topic, so they can help kids in the moment.
	What kind of training can we expect for families?	Technology training, ways in which parents can help children prepare to use a digital device and platform. In addition, training on our safety and emergency protocols are, and what parents can expect from the learning and procedural experiences at school.
	What is the timeline families can expect to receive communication regarding which model we will be beginning school?	July 22 - BOE meeting in which RPS plan will be presented July 24 - RPS submits its plan to the CSDE July 31 and onward - Weekly communications from Superintendent about reopening status and model
Space	Has the district looked into spaces elsewhere in town to use?	That is an ongoing conversation with the town for storage purposes to make more space in instructional classrooms. At this time we cannot support alternate locations for instruction. Alternate spaces for instruction require creating a new school and everything that comes with that we simply do not have the time or resources necessary.
Visitors	Are you allowing visitors in the schools? What about for emergencies?	No. We are limiting access to the schools to faculty, staff and children. If there is a need to see a child during the school day, we will establish protocols for this to be done safely. For example: Facetime with the principal phone.
	What about PPT meetings, PTA meetings?	In all scenarios, low/moderate/high risk - these meetings will happen virtually.

Cleaning/ Disinfecting	How often will schools be sanitized? What protocols will be practiced for sanitizing?	Schools will be comprehensively sanitized at the end of each school day. Schools will be closed to outside groups/organizations.
	What kind of training do you plan to supply for staff and students in regards to new hygiene practices?	We are still planning for our student and staff training- however it is expected that students will go through training during the first few days of school. Staff will be involved in development prior to the start of the school year. All of these materials will be accessible on the District website and sent home in order to have a common language.
Ventilation	What will happen for rooms that don't have windows?	Each room will have to be assessed individually for ventilation to see where and how student classrooms can be moved or swapped with another room that has windows or mechanical ventilation. HEPA filters will be added to a designated room for an individual with COVID symptoms.
	Are air conditioners allowed to run? How will air be properly ventilated?	Air conditioners will be permitted to run, as there are classrooms that will get too hot otherwise.
COVID Response	What will the protocols and practices be if a staff member or a student tests positive for COVID 19? Will the class and any other people who were in contact with the person be quarantined at home? That student's bus? For how long?	It is important to remember that there are medical symptoms that may not be COVID 19 related. Legally, we can not disclose medical information of faculty and staff. If an individual suspects or is displaying symptoms that they have COVID 19, the District requires that they must: • Go to the doctor and be tested • Return to work no sooner than 3 days fever free • 10 days of being quarantined from onset of symptoms • Provide a doctor's note The Department of Public Health will be our guide.
Quarantining	Will you be requiring	Yes, all students and staff are required to follow

	quarantine if students (or staff) travel to or come in contact with some from the 22 states listed with travel restrictions?	the rules established by the State of CT with respect to quarantine. Yes, although once the school year begins, we would expect that staff and students travel during appropriate school calendar times.
Social distancing	How will all classrooms be set up to ensure social distancing? Will you use desks instead of tables?	Currently, the state is requiring that students wear masks in their classrooms. In addition, student desks and or tables will be set up 3-6 feet apart. Where desks are available and make sense in the room configuration, they will be used. Any furniture that can be removed in order to make for more space between student spaces, will be removed. For our youngest children who are seated at tables and not desks, we will have partitions available for children who are having difficulty keeping their masks on.
	How will you conduct evacuation drills with social distancing?	We will be using the public health mitigating protocols, and we will create school-based drills that allow students to practice using alternative routes. Students will remain in cohorts during drills.
	How will social distancing be addressed during recess, PE, and time outside?	Our staff will provide opportunities for guided practice and teaching during the opening days of school. We will also be creating social stories for students and families to practice at home.
	Have we considered the use of outdoor space to create outdoor classrooms?	We are considering temporary structures to engage more outdoor time, specifically for lunch/recess in schools with greater space restrictions.
Cohorting	How will our “specials” classes run with these safety measures? Are they expected to physically interact with all of the cohorts in their school (or schools for our art teachers)?	At the elementary level art and music will be in the classroom, the teacher will be required to take extra precautions, such as increased hand washing and limiting of shared materials. Individual or small group orchestra or band lessons will still be provided in larger spaces so children can spread out. For PE, teachers will Physical education will focus on activities, exercises, and sports that are teacher-led, but performed individually using

		stations staggered participation to ensure separation of students.
	How are we cohorting if kids are getting on buses with different groups than who is in their class cohort?	Mask wearing will be required and we will keep logs of ridership on the bus for contact tracing.
	I have heard that other local districts are starting the year in a hybrid model, kids only coming into school for half of the week and the other half learning at home virtually. Are we going to do that? If not, why not?	We can't speak for other districts, but the guidance we have received right now from the CSDE is that we have to implement the model that aligns with our "risk" level. Right now, we (and the rest of CT) are low risk.
	How will special services work with cohorting	Students who receive special services are part of their general education cohort, and we will aim to provide services within the general education setting with their "nuclear" cohort as much as is appropriate for their established services plan. If they require services out of the general education setting, we will do that in accordance with their written plans. In some cases, a student's "pull out" group becomes another cohort that they are a part of. Students in our RISE, PREK, and 18-21 special education programs are often an intact cohort in and of themselves.
Screening	What protocols will be put in place to ensure no one is coming to school sick?	In addition to families partnering with the school district by keeping children home when exhibiting symptoms, families will also be asked to complete a home screener with their children daily.
Materials	If school materials are not to be shared (crayons, math manipulatives), will schools be given extra money to purchase supplies needed for classrooms?	While we will limit the sharing of supplies as much as possible, there will be some community supplies. Our efforts on hand washing and sanitizing will be a priority for students. Those materials that have to be shared will receive extra attention for sanitization.
Food	How will students eat safely in the cafeteria?	At this time we are reviewing our cafeteria spaces, and we are looking into how we can

	Will cafeteria purchases be allowed?	reduce the number of children in the space, along with looking into other room spaces to use, as students will be eating without masks on.
Transportation	Will you still use small buses at times? Or only large buses?	Small busses are still necessary for certain terrain
	How will you help students use safety procedures on the bus?	We are exploring the option of bus monitors for the purpose of loading and unloading procedures, seating arrangements, ensuring mask wearing protocols, and logging ridership.

XIII. REOPENING COMMITTEE

Health and Safety Subcommittee: James Ahern, MD Ed Briggs Alison Carmody Christina Cipriano Laura Clark, RN Aaron Crook, RN Jeanne Deming Wes DeSantis, EdD Karen Dewing (Leader) Elizabeth Floegel Regina Flynn Myra Gercak Laura Kenny, RN Joshua Kilbourn Julia Kolakowski Renee Janso Joseph Morits John Morris Caroline Olkoski, RN Cheryl Osher Meredith Renda, MD Scott Tucker	Teaching and Learning Subcommittee: Craig Creller Wes DeSantis, EdD Allison Elkow David Griffith Linda Haines Erica Ippoliti Sheila Jackson Jill Katkocin (Leader) Kristin Kleis Michael McNamara David Modzelewski Amanda Pasquarella Jarret Pepe Merryl Polak, EdD Christina Salvestrini Eileen Stewart Meghan Troy Alison Villanueva, PhD	Transportation Subcommittee: Melissa Adams Barbara Carroll Judy Gallagher Jennifer Hilderbrand Cheryl Krauchick Trish LaRosa Rick Lupinacci Patti Mitten Dawn Norton Anna O'Rourke Alyce Rae Patricia Ranieri Michael Yagid (Leader)
Facilities Subcommittee: Craig Creller Anthony DiDomenico Jane Grassi Allison Houlihan Ellen Mari Traci Mayette Sean McEvoy Brett Medders Dave Modzelewski Joe Morits (Leader) Shane Peters Bob Roth Anthony Showah, EdD Corey Sobkowiak Katie Ullinger	Social and Emotional Subcommittee: Stephanie Anderson Sarah Blanford Elizabeth Courtney-Seidler Leslie Danner Sarah Farina Kelly Feeney Andee Fitzgerald, RN Lisa Frese (Leader) Kaley Kowarick Amy Jonsson Susan Lasky-Sidovar, MD Megan Osimanti Rachel Ruggeri Janine Salimbene Kim VanAllsburg Elizabeth Van Duyne	Extracurriculars and Athletics Subcommittee: Steven Anton Jill Bornstein Kevin Callahan Elizabeth Hannaway, EdD (Leader) Jennifer Hench Christine Hopkinson Mike Hougasian Tiffany Lenz Dane Street Nicole Usher

Reopening Committee Membership (continued)

Community Relations

Subcommittee:

Ashley Brooksbank

Sean Connelly

Deborah Franceschini

Mike Flynn

Rich Gallini, PhD

Elizabeth Hannaway, EdD (Leader)

Tauna Idone

Tina Malhotra

Nora Marrinan

Mike Rettger

Scott Robert

A.J. Romeo

Tim Salem

Emily Shiller