

# **WESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



## **Return to School Plan 2021-2022**

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## Return to School Plan 2021-22

All Weston Public Schools (WPS) will reopen the 2021-22 school year with full day, in-person schooling. There is no option for voluntary distance learning. We need everyone's collective effort in order to keep students safe and healthy. The following plan is designed to provide protocols based on the mitigation strategies from the Connecticut State Department of Education and Department of Public Health ([CT DPH/CSDE Fall Mitigation Guidance](#)). WPS continues to consult with the Weston/Westport Health Department (WWHD) and district medical advisor for guidance and support as well. This plan will be updated as needed throughout the school year.

### HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

#### **Morning Health Checks**



Families and staff should conduct morning health checks in order to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 at school. Students and staff should stay home if they have temperatures above 100 degrees Fahrenheit and symptoms associated with COVID-19. Parents should notify the nurse if their children have had contact with someone who is positive for COVID-19. Staff members are required to report their absence in AESOP. Privacy will be protected.

#### **Masks are required**



All students and staff are required to wear masks in school per executive order by Governor Lamont (Governor's [Executive Order 13](#)). Masks must completely cover the nose and mouth and be held in place by ear loops or tie behind the head.

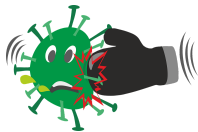
Mask breaks will be allowed in limited and controlled ways. Mask breaks are best achieved through physical distancing of greater than six feet with access to being outdoors, and must be staff-led and monitored.



The current [CDC Order](#) requires masking on school buses.

Medical exemptions for not wearing masks will be given to students only when medically verified and approved by the Superintendent and Director of Pupil Personnel Services. A centralized electronic record will be kept of students with permissions. Staff will be informed in a confidential manner of those students with medically approved permissions. In general, based on guidance from the WWHD and medical advisor, very few students will qualify for medical exemptions not to wear masks.

### **Vaccinations**



Vaccination is the most important prevention strategy, and we encourage all eligible students to be fully vaccinated prior to the start of school. To avoid being quarantined, families should provide the school nurse with a copy of student vaccination cards. This may be an electronic or hard copy (WMS Nurse email [luzbenedict@westonps.org](mailto:luzbenedict@westonps.org) and WHS Nurse & WPS Nursing Supervisor email [sherylzulkeski@westonps.org](mailto:sherylzulkeski@westonps.org) ).

All WPS staff must be vaccinated against COVID-19 on or before September 27, 2021. Specific requirements and exemptions are detailed in the following link:

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Office-of-the-Governor/Executive-Orders/Lamont-Executive-Orders/Executive-Order-No-13D.pdf>

### **Contact Tracing/Vaccinations/Isolation**

When a positive case of COVID-19 is reported in one of the schools, the school administration will notify District Nurse Supervisor Sheryl Zulkeski who will communicate with members of the District COVID-19 Management Team.

The school administration will notify school staff that there is a positive case and will call the parents of affected students who may become symptomatic and need to quarantine. This includes contacting vaccinated students. A follow up email will be sent to the parents with specific information and protocols.

### **District COVID-19 Dashboard**



The district will communicate positive and quarantine cases via the district dashboard that is updated by the building nurses. There will be no district email blasts. The COVID19 dashboard link is as follows:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1x9nswxZtZmRbMZwZXFzFnZeHNG1NR7v3AdgogI5pOtSF8/edit?usp=sharing>

## **Quarantines**

The district will follow the [CT DPH/CSDE Fall Mitigation Guidance](#) for contact tracing and quarantining. Quarantine practices are based on being within 6 feet for a minimum of 15 minutes to a person who is positive for COVID-19.

There is one new change this fall regarding the classroom setting. Students in the classroom where everyone is wearing a mask will only be quarantined if they were within 3 feet of another student positive for COVID-19. The district recommends that they get tested.

Students who are within 6 feet from another student diagnosed with COVID -19 (for example, lunch or school bus) will need to quarantine. The district recommends that they get tested.

Vaccinated students who are in close contact with a confirmed positive case of COVID-19 will not be required to quarantine if asymptomatic, and the school nurse has a copy of their proof of vaccination. They will be asked to obtain a test within 3-5 days.

Vaccinated staff will not be required to quarantine if asymptomatic and the Human Resources Director has a copy of proof of vaccination. They will be asked to obtain a test within 3-5 days.

The length of the quarantine is 10 calendar days. Due to the circulating and highly contagious Delta variant, the 10 days quarantine will not be shortened at this time. This decision was made in consultation with WWHD and our district medical advisor. We will carefully monitor this situation and review and revise this protocol as needed.

Students and staff positive for COVID- 19 will need to be isolated for 10 days from the start of symptoms or the date of the positive test and may return after 10 days if they are symptom free.

The following link provides additional information from the Center for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

## **Isolation**

Students that become ill at school with COVID-19 symptoms should be sent to the nurses office where they will be isolated. Nurses will wear protective gear including N95

masks, gowns and gloves. Parents will be contacted to pick up their student and the nurses will bring the student outside for parent pick up. Parents should not enter the building. Staff members who become ill will leave the school immediately.

### **Travel**

WPS will continue to recommend CDC guidance regarding domestic and international travel. The following links are a resource: <https://portal.ct.gov/coronavirus/travel> and <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html>



## **SCHOOL DAY PROTOCOLS**

As noted above, students and staff are required to wear masks in the school buildings. The district will provide masks on a limited basis.

Masks will not be required for outdoor activities including recess and physical education.

WPS will continue to provide mask breaks during the school day.

Sanitizing stations are located in the entrances to all schools, in classrooms, and throughout the building. Students and staff should wash their hands frequently during the school day.

There is signage in the school buildings that promote these healthy protocols. WPS will continue to implement physical distancing of 3 feet to the extent possible in classrooms and other settings.

To assist with ventilation, classrooms doors and windows will be kept open.

Parents and staff are reminded that food is not part of classroom and school celebrations per Board of Education Policy.

Music, including choral and instrumental groups and ensembles, will be permitted to practice and perform maintaining extended distancing where possible.

School lunches will be served in the common areas at WIS, WMS & WHS. Students will eat lunch primarily in their classrooms at HES.

## **Social Emotional Needs**

The social emotional needs of our students continue to be a district priority. Every school is focused on reconnecting students and staff to in-person school through our responsive classroom (grades preK--5), and advisory programs. (grades 6-12) School counselors, psychologists and social workers will continue to provide counseling support in both individual and group settings. Emotional intelligence initiatives of RULER and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) will continue with special focus on the challenges during COVID. They include: coping skills, emotional regulation, re-acclimation to in-person learning, socialization with masks and physical distancing.

As noted above, all students will be masked on school buses and windows will be open. Students are encouraged to sit with their siblings on the bus.. Students are not permitted to ride a different bus to another students' house.

Students may participate in co-curricular activities and clubs. They must wear masks and practice physical distancing indoors.

Athletics will resume in accordance with CIAC, CSDE and DPH guidance.

<http://www.casciac.org/pdfs/CIACFall2021COVIDSportGuidance-8-12-21.pdf>

Spectators will be permitted at games (outdoor and indoor) subject to CIAC, CSDE and DPH guidance. All spectators must be masked indoors.

## **School visitors/parent meetings**

Visitors in the buildings will be limited to educational or school business needs. All parent meetings will be virtual until further notice. This includes Back to School Nights. No volunteers will be permitted in the building during the school day. We hope to modify this protocol during the school year as conditions change.



## **CLEANING & MAINTAINING OF FACILITIES**

Cleaning and maintaining of the facilities and ventilation continue to be a district priority and practices align with the mitigating strategies from the Connecticut State Department of Education and Department of Public Health. ([CT DPH/CSDE Fall Mitigation Guidance](#)).



The district is committed to providing appropriate ventilation and air flow in buildings. All HVAC systems and exhaust fans were checked and repaired, and filters were replaced

prior to the start of school. Rooms with windows will remain open when occupied. Special attention has been given to classrooms of unvaccinated students in the lower schools. Hepa filters were installed in classrooms and larger common spaces across buildings.

## **CONTINUITY OF SERVICES**

The WPS mission, as a caring and supportive community partnership, is to empower each student to achieve success and contribute to our global society by developing and cultivating character, knowledge and creativity through a dynamic learning experience that challenges each student to continually pursue personal excellence.

In-person instruction remains the best means for student success. The district priorities for the 2021-22 school year are students' academic progress, their positive mental and physical well being, and connections with peers and adults. Our schooling scenario will reflect a return to learning within the physical school setting, except as defined by the limited circumstances outlined below. The circumstances to be addressed are anticipated to focus on the limited number of students who may be quarantined due to COVID-19 exposure

Reasons to allow for virtual learning:

- Quarantine due to COVID exposure (7-10 days) in school. Contingent upon school quarantining requirements set by DPH
- Quarantine due to COVID positivity (if well enough to attend)

Students absent for other reasons including, but not limited to family travel and college visits will not be permitted to participate in virtual learning.

## **SCHOOL PLANS FOR QUARANTINED STUDENTS**

### **K-5 HES & WIS Framework for Student Support**

Students who are positive and symptomatic are not expected to participate. Missed class time will be recorded as an absence, and work can be made up upon return.

Students who are quarantined due to close contact at school and who remain asymptomatic are expected to engage virtually:

- Students in our Early Learning Center will be provided with virtual learning through Google Meets.
- K-5 Students will have daily Google Meets in alignment with their schedule and asynchronous work posted in their Google Classroom/SeeSaw



- Asynchronous work will be provided by special area teachers when in person instruction does not allow for at home learning, such as PE being conducted outside
- 24 hour lead time for student/family to pick up materials and teachers to plan for instruction
- Special education and SRBI services will be provided virtually; students should follow their student schedule in order to receive their services.

**WMS Framework for Student Support:**

Students who are positive and symptomatic are not expected to participate. Missed class time will be recorded as an absence, and work can be made up upon return.

Students who are quarantined due to close contact at school and who remain asymptomatic are expected to engage virtually:

- Students will attend their classes and special education/related service lessons at their regularly scheduled time via Google Meet.
- Teachers will check in with students
- Participation will be modified based on the in-class activities
- Students will make up assessments upon return to school; there will be no remote administration of assessments
- Students will check their Team Calendar

The aim is for students to stay current with content and assignments to the extent possible; they may not be able to fully participate in class activities, and make-up work may still be required upon return.

**WHS Framework for Student Support:**

Students who are positive and symptomatic are not expected to participate. Missed class time will be recorded as an absence, and work can be made up upon return.

Students who are quarantined due to close contact at school and who remain asymptomatic are expected to engage virtually:

- Students will attend their classroom and special education/related service lessons at their regularly scheduled time via Google Meet.
- Teachers will check in with students
- Students will access materials and assignments on teachers' Canvas pages
- Students will access remote extra help as needed per teachers' posted office hours

- Students will make up assessments upon return to school; there will be no remote administration of assessments

The aim is for students to stay current with content and assignments to the extent possible; they may not be able to fully participate in class activities, and make-up work may still be required upon return.

## **STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC INPUT**

This Safe Return to School Plan was introduced at a special meeting of the Board of Education on August 18, 2021. It was presented and reviewed for comment at staff and faculty meetings in each of the four schools as well as the district leadership team composed of all district and building administrators prior to the beginning of school. The Safe Return to School Plan is posted on the district website. If parents/guardians or staff have a question or wish to provide feedback, they should contact their school representative listed below.

## **PERIODIC REVIEW PROCESS**

The Safe Return Management Team will review this plan and make revisions in accordance with guidelines from the Connecticut State Department of Education and the Connecticut Department of Health. Parents, students, and staff will be informed of any changes as they occur.

## **SAFE RETURN MANAGEMENT TEAM**

The WPS members of the Safe Return Management Team collaborate regularly to ensure district wide consistency and quality in the actuation of the health and safety strategies. The Public Health and Medical Consultants are included on an “on-call” basis and turned to for expert guidance as necessary. For the 2021-22 school year, the members are:

### **Districtwide Safe Return Oversight**

- Lisa Wolak, Superintendent
- Michael DelMastro, Director of Facilities
- Sheryl Zulkeski, WPS Nurse Coordinator

### **Building Health & Safety Oversight**

- Hurlbutt Elementary School: Matthew Paylor, Assistant Principal
- Weston Intermediate School: Nicole Wilhelm, Assistant Principal
- Weston Middle School: Dru Walters, Assistant Principal
- Weston High School: Matthew Filip, Assistant Principal

### **Public Health and Medical Consultants**

- Mark Cooper, Director of Westport/Weston Health District
- Dr. Laura Marks, Medical Advisor