

August 18, 2021

Dear Mansfield Families,

With the start of school around the corner, I know that many of you may be wondering if we have had to alter our reopening plans. Certainly this virus continues to throw us curve balls! We are fortunate, however, that we have good experiences from last year and the support of our state agencies as we plan for our reopening. The State of Connecticut Department of Education and Department of Public Health have provided interim school reopening guidance and are expected to finalize that guidance soon. In recent communications from these departments there are a few clear messages:

- Vaccination is the best prevention against Covid-19.
- The goal for this school year is 100% in-person learning.
- Continuing to apply layered mitigation strategies such as wearing masks, distancing, and hand hygiene creates barriers to spreading the virus.

Once final guidance is received from the State, the *Mansfield Continuity of Learning Plan* will be updated and sent to you for public comment. As we await that final guidance, know that we are planning a safe reopening by implementing many of the strategies used in the previous school year. Those strategies and more are detailed below.

All students will attend school five full days. The state of emergency that allowed the State Board of Education to approve such alternatives as hybrid instruction or full remote learning is no longer in place and therefore all districts must meet statutory requirements for school attendance – in person instruction for a minimum of 180 days.

Vaccinations – We continue to encourage all eligible residents (those aged 12 and older) to receive the COVID-19 vaccination as soon as possible. Vaccinations are available in many locations around the state and appointments are no longer needed at vaccination sites. To find a vaccination site near you go to <https://covidvaccinefinder.ct.gov/>. In addition, several mobile vaccination clinics have been scheduled this summer in and around Mansfield including clinics at the Storrs Adventure Park from 10:00-2:00 on August 18, 19, 25, and 26; and EO Smith High School on August 26 from 10:00-4:00. **Please be sure to notify your school nurse when your child is vaccinated.** We have no updated information on when the vaccine will be approved for children under age 12 but will keep you informed as we hear more.

Masks –Governor Lamont’s Executive Order 13A requires the wearing of masks in specific locations including schools and on public transportation which includes school buses. This

order currently is in place until September 30, 2021. **Therefore, when school reopens, all students and staff will be required to wear masks while in school and while riding on school buses.** We have no information regarding requirements beyond September 30 at this time.

Physical Distancing – Using data from the 2020-21 school year, studies regarding the effect of physical distancing found that the best practice is to distance students three feet from each other in classrooms when possible. We will continue to arrange classrooms to provide physical distancing among students.

Hand Hygiene - Hand sanitizer will continue to be provided to each classroom and in common areas of the schools. We will continue our hand hygiene practices from 2020-21 which required sanitizing hands multiple times throughout the day as students moved about the building and in and out of classrooms.

Buses - Assigned seats and loading and unloading strategies used in 2020-21 will continue. Masks must be worn at all times per both Governor Lamont's executive Order and federal regulations requiring masks on all forms of public transportation.

Notification of Positive Cases – We will continue to send communications whenever a member of the school community has tested positive for COVID-19. Please note that we attempt to notify the families of students who have been identified as a close contact prior to the release of the communication.

Contact Tracing – There is a slight change in the contact tracing protocols based on findings from research done in schools. Should a member of the school community test positive for COVID-19, contact tracing will be conducted to identify those individuals within close contact. Close contact is defined as within 6 feet for 15 minutes or longer **EXCEPT among students in a classroom setting where students are wearing masks.** In such a setting, the contact tracing is reduced to those within 3 feet for 15 minutes or longer. This applies between students and students and not between students and teachers or teachers and teachers.

Quarantine Requirements – Quarantine periods are different for those who are fully vaccinated and for those who are not yet vaccinated. Fully vaccinated staff and students who have been identified as a close contact, and are not symptomatic, DO NOT need to quarantine but testing is recommended between days 3 and 5. For those who are not yet vaccinated, the quarantine period is 10 days. Students who must quarantine will be supported with instruction while at home which may include synchronous and asynchronous learning.

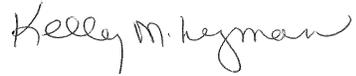
Travel - Travel guidance from April is unchanged. Fully vaccinated people may travel domestically with no quarantine or testing required. Testing and self-quarantining is recommended for unvaccinated individuals (<https://portal.ct.gov/coronavirus/travel>). All international travel requires testing prior to return to the US.

Remote Learning – Remote learning was temporarily permitted due to the State of Emergency created by the COVID-19 pandemic. That State of Emergency has ended and thus statutory requirements that all children attend school for a minimum of 180 days are once again active.

For students who are quarantined, an instructional program that meets attendance guidance will be offered but this should not be confused with the remote learning offered last year. Schools also are no longer able to use remote learning for inclement weather days.

I hope this information has been helpful. Please reach out to your school principal or my office should you have questions. I look forward to seeing our students back in school very soon!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelly M. Lyman".

Kelly M. Lyman