

August 4, 2020

Dear Mansfield Families,

It was good to talk with so many of you last week through the Zoom meetings and I thank those of you who sent follow-up communications. We are appreciative of all the input and feedback and it is helping us refine our plans for 2020-21.

As I have shared before, we continue to receive information and updates from the state nearly daily. If you were not able to attend one of the Zoom meetings ([see here](#) or [here](#)) last week, you may not know that just over a week ago we were granted some flexibility with regards to the model we would use to reopen school. Later last week we received public health guidelines to assist us with determining when we needed to move to a more restrictive approach to schooling. Then Friday evening, we received word that our plan for reopening would be due to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) on Wednesday, August 7. Below I have attempted to recap the reopening requirements, details on how we are meeting those requirements, and the final decision on how schools will open in September. Finally, I have shared the choices parents have for the upcoming year.

Mansfield's Plan for Reopening

Each school district was required to prepare for three approaches to schooling: full in person schooling five days a week, a hybrid model that reduces the number of students in school on any given day such that some students are receiving in person instruction and some are learning remotely, and a full distance learning plan. Each school district must be prepared to move from one model to another dependent upon public health data.

There are many health and safety requirements of schools for reopening. These include mitigation factors such as cohorting (keeping students together in defined groups throughout the day), the wearing of face masks, physical distancing in all areas of the school, transportation protocols, cleaning and disinfecting strategies, and health monitoring and isolation of ill students and staff. The Mansfield plan for reopening meets or exceeds all of the state requirements. To see details about health and safety as well as all other elements of our reopening planning, I invite you to review our [plan](#) found on the Mansfield Public Schools website.

Yesterday, Dr. Anthony Fauci joined Governor Lamont at a press conference. He reinforced the importance of adhering to mitigation strategies and ensuring facility conditions, such as proper

ventilation, for school reopening. In Mansfield we are able to adhere to all mitigation factors and can provide appropriate ventilation.

Use of Public Health Data

The state plan includes sending public health data to districts each week by county. Based on a model created by the Harvard Global Health Initiative, there are four indicators to track the data with metrics defining the level of risk (see below). In collaboration with our local department of public health, decisions to alter our schooling approach should be based on these metrics.

Leading Indicator	LOW Favors more In-Person Learning	MODERATE Favors moving to Hybrid Learning	HIGH Favors moving to Remote Learning
Number of new cases of COVID-19 (7 day rolling average of new cases per 100,000 population per day)	< 10 new cases per 100,000 population	10 to < 25 new cases per 100,000 population	25+ new cases per 100,000 population

Secondary Indicators	LOW Favors more In-Person Learning	MODERATE Favors moving to Hybrid Learning	HIGH Favors moving to Remote Learning
Percent positivity rate (# of positive tests/ # of total tests, 7-day rolling avg.)	Direction of Change: Secondary Indicators trending down to flat	Direction of Change: Secondary Indicators trending flat to upward	Direction of Change: Secondary Indicators trending upward
Number of new COVID-19 hospitalizations per 100,000 population (7-day rolling avg.)	Speed of Change: No statistically significant changes to Secondary Indicators	Speed of Change: Any statistically significant changes upward to Secondary Indicators	Speed of Change: Consistent, statisti- cally significant changes upward to Secondary Indicators
COVID-like and Influenza-like Illness (CLI and ILI) Syndromic Surveillance			

We received the first set of data yesterday. All leading and secondary public health indicators for Tolland County are well within the low risk zone suggesting school can fully reopen.

Current Status of Indicators by County

County	Leading Indicator	Secondary Indicators		
	New COVID-19 Cases (7 day avg. per 100k pop.)	Percent Test Positivity	New COVID-19 Hospital Admissions (7 day avg. per 100k pop.)	Percent COVID-like illness hospital ED visits
Connecticut	● 2.0	● 1.0%	● 0.4	● 1.3%
Fairfield	● 2.5	● 1.4%	● 0.6	● 1.8%
Hartford	● 1.6	● 1.0%	● 0.5	● 0.5%
Litchfield	● 1.3	● 0.5%	● 0.3	● 0.6%
Middlesex	● 1.1	● 0.6%	● 0.4	● 0.9%
New Haven	● 2.0	● 1.0%	● 0.5	● 1.3%
New London	● 1.8	● 0.8%	● 0.1	● 0.7%
Tolland	● 1.5	● 0.9%	● 0.0	● 0.6%
Windham	● 2.9	● 1.3%	● 0.1	● 0.4%

When health metrics are within the low and moderate categories, the reopening flexibility gives districts the opportunity to choose either full in person or a hybrid approach to schooling. When metrics are in these categories, districts may only operate in a distance learning model after undergoing a review by a panel comprised of members of the State Board of Education, the State Department of Education, and the Department of Public Health.

Public Acceptance

In addition to assessing our ability to meet the reopening requirements and public health data, there have also been conversations with numerous members of the staff, parents, and community members. Despite our preparedness and the low rates of infection in our area, there remains concern about returning to school. Much of this concern comes from appearing to too quickly transition from being at home to all students being in school, along with the uncertainty of adding thousands of university students to our community. Therefore, the plan to reopen Mansfield schools has been developed to slow the transition while assessing the impact of the return of UCONN students.

Reopening School Model

Mansfield schools will reopen using the hybrid model. Students will be assigned to group A or group B. Group A students will typically attend school on Mondays and Tuesdays and Group B students will attend on Thursdays and Fridays. When not in school, students will engage in remote learning planned by their teacher. On Wednesdays, all students will engage in remote

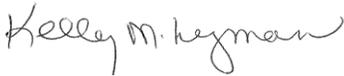
learning. Most students in preschool and some students with special education needs will attend school five days a week.

Health data will continue to be monitored weekly. On or about October 1, a decision will be made to continue in the hybrid model or to begin the full in person model. The full in person model switch would be made on October 14 following the long weekend. If at any time during this first month, health data falls in the “high” category, schools will operate under the distance learning model. (A complete calendar of the opening days and first month of school will be available next week.)

Parents may choose to keep children at home and continue remote learning by opting into learning at home five days a week. Parents must be willing to provide oversight and student attendance will be taken daily. Students who opt in to remote learning will be supported by a team of teachers and para-educators and instruction will follow the Mansfield curriculum. A combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning experiences will be provided. Students may return to in person learning at any time with one week’s notice. A survey requesting a decision from each family will be sent in the coming days.

Once again, families and schools must work in partnership to do what is best for the children of Mansfield. Please continue to share your thoughts and questions with us as we all navigate this new terrain together.

Sincerely,

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

Kelly M. Lyman
Superintendent of Schools