

August 11, 2020

Dear Mansfield Families,

I hope this message finds you safe and with a return to full power. It certainly has been an interesting year!

Our preparation for the reopening of the Mansfield Public Schools continues. As I have shared, we receive more information weekly, sometimes daily, from the State Department of Education and our own planning develops further with each day.

As shared last week, Mansfield Public Schools will reopen in a hybrid model for the first month of the school year. Students will be assigned to attendance group A or attendance group B. After careful consideration, groups will be determined by alphabet. Students with a last name from A to K will attend school on Mondays and Tuesdays. Students with last names from L to Z will attend school on Thursdays and Fridays. On the days students do not attend school they will be engaged in distance learning.

Please note the following:

- If the children in your family have more than one last name, and would naturally fall into different attendance groups, please let us know and we will be sure to assign children to the same group.
- Likewise, if you have other needs that necessitate switching the days your children attend school, please reach out to your principal. We will make as many accommodations as possible.
- Thanks to great regional cooperation, the communities that make up the Region 19 districts have worked together to provide as much consistency as possible.
- Mansfield Parks and Recreation sent a survey to families about a week and half ago asking about the need for child care before and after school. If you have not already done so, please respond to that survey or contact them directly about your need for care.

The Connecticut State Department of Education is allowing families to temporarily opt in to full remote learning. Details can be found in Addendum 1 on page 48 of the state's plan, Adapt, Advance, Achieve at <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Press-Room/Press-Releases/2020/Adapt-Advance-Achieve> and on page 7 of the [Mansfield Plan to Reopen Schools](#). **At this time we ask that families notify us of their intentions for the start of the 2020-21 school year. Please read through the FAQs below and then complete the survey. Please complete one survey per child so that we can account for each student. The survey will remain open until by Monday, August 17.**

Frequently Asked Questions

What will a typical week look like for my child?

Students in attendance group A will attend school on Monday and Tuesday. Children in attendance group B will attend school on Thursday and Friday. When not in school, students will be engaged in distance learning. This will include some synchronous whole group instruction, some small group or individual support, and some time working independently. Parents should plan on children being engaged on a schedule similar to what they would experience if in school. Students will experience three days of distance learning: the two days they are not in school and Wednesdays.

Will my child have a device for distance learning?

Yes, every child in grade K and 1 will be assigned a mini iPad. Children in grades 2-8 will be assigned a Chromebook. Chargers will also be provided. These devices will be distributed on September 3 and 4 (the following week for grades K and 1). Children who still have a device from last spring should bring it to school on the first day fully charged and ready to use. (Children opting in to remote learning will be given a time to pick up a device.) All children should plan on bringing their device to school with them daily and taking it home each evening. We ask that devices be charged each evening so that they are ready to be used when students arrive at school. (When used at home, these devices include some safeguards but they are not as robust as when used in school. We remind you that supervision of your child's use of technology is encouraged.)

What other technology supports are available?

We are in the process of adding a technology integration specialist to our staff. This certified teacher will be available to support teachers in their use of technology tools and answer parent questions about accessing the tools from home. In addition, all teachers will use time in the first weeks of the year to orient students to their devices and the tools they will be using. Finally, the CT State Department of Education has made some excellent resources available to families through the CT Learning Hub. Look for more information on this in the coming weeks.

What are our mitigation strategies?

To reduce the number of people students and staff come into contact with each day, students will be assigned to cohort groups and remain with the students only throughout the day with just a few exceptions in the upper middle grades. All students and staff will wear masks. Frequent hand-washing or sanitizing will occur and enhanced cleaning protocols have been established including a mid-day clean of all desk surfaces and bathroom cleaning three times a day. For a complete review of facility and operational plans see pages 8-15 of the [Mansfield Reopening Plan](#).

When does school begin and what is the schedule for the first few weeks?

School begins on Thursday, September 3. The first two days of school will be used primarily to welcome back students and orient them to the new safety protocols and practices. To assist with the transition back, the first two days will operate on the early dismissal schedule. Lunch will be served on these days. There will be no distance learning on these days.

The following week includes Labor Day on Monday. Students will attend school two days that week and be engaged in distance learning two days that week. The opening of school schedule will be as follows:

Thursday, September 3 – Group A Attends - Early Dismissal Day

Friday, September 4 – Group B Attends – Early Dismissal Day

Monday, September 7 – Labor Day – No School

Tuesday, September 8 – Group A Attends – Full Day and Begin Instruction for Students Opting in to Remote Learning

Wednesday, September 9 – Group A Attends – Full Day

Thursday, September 10 – Group B Attends – Full Day

Friday, September 11 – Group B Attends – Full Day

The calendar for the first month is attached.

Is the calendar the same for prekindergarten students?

No. Prekindergarten families will be invited to come to their child's classroom by appointment on September 3 or 4. You will receive more information from your child's prekindergarten teacher. The regular school schedule for prekindergarten children begins on Tuesday, September 8. Prekindergarten cohorts have been kept small. Prekindergarten students will attend school five days a week in either a morning or afternoon session.

What happens after the first month?

Our reopening plan includes actions to operate using three approaches to schooling – full in person, hybrid, and full distance learning. The hybrid approach was chosen for the month of September to allow us to implement the required mitigation strategies in reduced cohort groups and to monitor public health data. While current public health data are favorable for in person learning for schools in Tolland County, the impact of students returning to the university is a concern. By the end of September we will know that impact and a determination will then be made to continue with the hybrid approach or to move to the full

in person approach. Of course, if data at any time suggest it is not safe to continue with in person learning, then we will quickly move to a distance learning model.

When might a transition to full in person schooling begin?

On or about October 1 a decision will be made regarding the model to be used moving forward. If we switch to in person five days a week, that change will occur on October 14 following the October holiday and staff professional day.

How will busing be provided?

We will continue to operate a full fleet of 17 buses allowing us to significantly reduce the number of students riding the bus on any given day in the hybrid model. Students will be required to wear masks on the bus and load the bus beginning with the last seat. Ridership may be low enough to allow for one student per seat. If not, siblings will be asked to sit together before others are asked to sit together. We are seeking bus monitors for the morning runs for the first three weeks of the school year.

Is the decision I make for my child's schooling a decision for the full year?

No. Our plan allows for you to opt in to remote learning at any time. Likewise, if you choose remote learning you may decide to have your child re-enter school at any time. We ask for one week's notice to support the transition and to allow us to make a classroom placement.

What would my child's week look like if I choose to temporarily opt in to remote learning?

Students who remain at home five days a week will be supported by a distance learning team comprised of Mansfield teachers and para-educators. Students will follow the Mansfield curriculum and the team will coordinate instruction with classroom teachers. Students will experience some synchronous instruction and some asynchronous instruction including independent assignments appropriate to the age of the child. "Specials" will be included in the weekly learning plans. Parents will be responsible for monitoring and supporting students.

Why are you asking us to decide at this time about schooling for the fall?

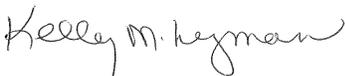
We have a significant amount of work ahead of us to assign students to classrooms that are balanced and to finalize plans for those students who opt in to remote learning. As we work to accommodate the needs of all students and families, please be aware that at the elementary level, the assigned classroom teacher may change from what was shared last June.

What if I have other questions? Where can I get more information?

Please refer to our [webpage](#) for previous communications, recorded sessions of parent Q and A sessions, and additional resources. In addition, principals will be holding weekly Zoom sessions with parents to provide specific school-based information and answer additional questions. During these sessions principals will show you what typical classroom will look like and share a typical daily schedule. Please watch for communication from your child's school for these sessions.

Please complete the survey found <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7C3KL5T> for each child in your family by Monday, August 17.

Sincerely,



Kelly M. Lyman