



REGION 15 SCHOOLS 2020-21 REOPENING INFORMATION

WWW.REGION15.ORG/SCHOOLREOPENING
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August 30, 2020

Dear Parents, Guardians and Staff,

I hope this communication finds you and your family well as we are in the final weekend before students return to school! I need not tell anyone who has read our large plan what a monumental task our path to school reopening has been. As we move forward, our focus during this return to school transition will be to re-acclimate our students back into changed facilities after an almost 6 month break.

All students in grades 1-12 and Pre-K begin on Tuesday September 1 and will be on an early release schedule.

Our schools are ready to welcome you. This week, our teachers and staff not only engaged in professional development on technology, safety and cleaning protocols, curriculum work, and social and emotional well-being, but were inspired by the words of Region 15's Teacher of the Year, Christine Musante, Kindergarten teacher at Pomperaug Elementary school, and Dr. John Ramos, the facilitator for our committees on equity and inclusion, at our convocation.

My message to the staff focused on flexibility and patience. These first few weeks especially will require that of all of us including students and parents.

I am proud of our Region 15 staff for the work they have done to prepare for our first day of the 2020-21 school year. Our schools and classrooms are ready for students. While we watch the rest of our state and are aware of the potential impacts out of our control, the conditions in our towns allow us to open, based on data from the [CT School Learning Model Indicators](#).

Listed below are important updates regarding school opening:

- Building principals have increased their communications this week regarding building specific information and schedules. Please become familiar with the information specific to your child's school. Information can be found on each school's individual website.
- **COVID-19 Exposure Procedures:**
- Region 15 Schools in conjunction with the Pomperaug and Torrington Health Departments and the State of CT, Department of Public Health, are using DPH [Addendum 5](#) and the existing CT COVID-19 monitoring and response framework for responding to potential COVID-19 cases and contacts in the schools. Addendum 5 has several scenarios for assessment and response to individuals who have either tested positive, are symptomatic/asymptomatic, or have been a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case. We will continue to work with our local health departments and the State to minimize the risks to our children, school staff and their families by limiting COVID-19 exposures and spread. Keeping illness symptoms out of the schools and using COVID-19 prevention tools like masks and social distancing is critical to keeping schools open.
- If there is a positive test in the school (students or staff) it is critically important that we do not panic or overreact until we know all of the facts. The first action that occurs is verifying the facts of the situation

and verifying the test results for individuals. We need to know whether the person has received a positive test result (PCR/Antigen) for COVID-19 by their physician.

- The second step is understanding the exposures. When a student or staff member is potentially a close contact (direct exposure) to a person that has tested positive for COVID-19, school district personnel and the Pomperaug and/or Torrington Health Departments will be calling parents and staff to follow up. If it is determined that no exposure occurred, then no action is required by the district and no parent and/or staff notification will be issued. If a COVID-19 assessment determines that a positive COVID-19 case was in a school and/or if it is determined that a student and/or staff has had direct contact to a positive COVID-19 case then the individuals involved will be appropriately isolated, counseled, and proper notifications made to people affected. Illness investigation and response is confidential work to protect the privacy of ill people as required by law. *Notifications will be issued to parents and staff when it is important to notify you of exposure resulting in closing a classroom and/or a school for disinfection, investigation, and effective response.*
- **Daily Health Checks:** Monday 8/29/20 expect to receive a test of the daily health check. You will receive one each morning for each child in the district. We ask that you affirm your child's wellness each morning.
- **Bus Routes:** All students have been assigned a bus route, *whether or not you have indicated a need for transportation*. This information has been shared via email and can be found on the website, www.region15.org/BusRoutes. Questions regarding routes can be made to First Student Bus Company at (203) 758-1686. **Important:** All students MUST wear a mask while boarding, riding, and exiting school buses.
- **Chromebooks:** If possible, students should bring in chromebooks to their school on their first day of school. This includes school issued chromebooks from the Spring. We also welcome students to bring in their personal device to use in school if they have one. Once the devices ordered by the district arrive, we will be able to issue a school device to every student.
- **Cohorts:** All students have been assigned to either Cohort A or Cohort B.
- **High school students ONLY** will use this information currently to determine their schedule in the Social Distanced Hybrid Schedule.
- **For students in grades PK-8** the hybrid information is for planning purposes only and will not be needed unless the district moves to a Phase 2 school schedule (Hybrid for all students).
- All students were provided a cohort regardless of how they choose to currently access their learning, in-person or remote. As we know, the situation may change.
- We understand that families may have personal needs to switch cohorts. We ask that you please wait two weeks before making special requests so we can minimize changes.
- **For K-8 families with students in multiple schools**, we apologize for the error and inconvenience in yesterday's communication. All family members will be in the same cohort and corrections will be sent out later tomorrow.
- **Mask Guidance:** The State of Connecticut is expected to release school specific mask criteria in the near future. We expect that it will follow closely the guidance by the CDC that can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>
- The district will provide masks to any student without one.
- **School Lunch Information:** Information about Food Services for the upcoming School Year can be found [here](#). Please read this letter thoroughly, as it includes information on how to purchase lunch as a remote distance learner and changes to the cafeteria for the 2020-21 school year. www.Region15.org/FoodServices
- **Parent Webinar Series:** As part of the return to school orientation process we will be hosting webinars in the next few weeks designed for parents on the use of the tools our students will be using in the classroom this year. If you have any suggestions on what you would like to see, you can email DistanceLearning@region15.org
- **Parent Webinar:** On Friday, August 28th, Region 15 held a webinar titled *Parent Training and Education Related to Anxiety Management: For Self-Care and For their Children/Adolescents*. This webinar was a conversation with Dr. Citron who is a clinical psychologist from Connecticut Behavioral Health. She also provided professional learning for our staff last week and specifically for our administrators the week prior. In case you could not attend the webinar last Friday, it was recorded and

could be found here: [Anxiety Reduction Techniques for Parents Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic / Webinar Video](#)

I promise, these messages will get shorter, thank you for staying with us to the end of today's information.

We expect the process of returning will be a learning experience for all of us, and the reality is there will be some stumbles. We appreciate your flexibility and patience during this transition time and your support for our students and staff.

Reopening our Schools 2020: We are Connected. We are Prepared. We are Region 15!

Thank you,

Joshua Smith
Superintendent
Region 15 Public Schools