

ANSONIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Ansonia Public School Families,

This has been a very long summer and for families and school staff. I wanted to share with you some of the key measures we have taken to support the health and safety of students and staff. I also wanted to share things that have been explored but we have learned they are not medically supported. We also would like families to know there have been many logistical challenges implementing these measures. We continue to improve and welcome those opportunities.

Please know we are constantly re-evaluating our plan and know that health and safety is our guide through this entire process. Lastly, we welcome any suggestions and I would ask you to share those suggestions with your child's building administrator.

Measures the Ansonia Public Schools are Taking to Ensure Safety

Face masks are required to be worn by all students and staff. We will have masks in both adult and pediatric sizes, available in all classrooms, at our school entrances, and in our buses in the event that students or staff need them.

Social Distancing strategies will be maximized to the greatest extent possible in our classrooms, cafeterias, gyms, learning spaces, etc.

Cohorting of students to the greatest extent possible will occur in all our buildings.

Our Hybrid Plan, with students attending on a rotating schedule Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, with 50% of our students in each day. Wednesday will be a remote learning day for all Ansonia Public School students.

School lunch will be served. To maximize social distancing to the greatest extent possible, we intend to use our cafeterias and outdoor spaces as well.

Tents ranging in size from 10' x 10' to 10' x 20' will be installed at all K-12 buildings to support dining, instruction, and mask breaks

School Bus routes are planned below the full passenger capacity. Parents electing to drive their child and the hybrid model will further limit the number of passengers.

Frequent hand washing or use of hand sanitizer will be required by all.

Multiple hand sanitizing stations will be provided at the entrances and various strategic locations in our buildings. All classrooms, learning spaces, and offices will have hand sanitizer containers as well.

A supply of **disinfecting wipes** will be available in all classrooms, learning spaces, offices, etc.

Our buildings will be cleaned, sanitized, and disinfected every evening by our custodial staff.

We will have **additional part-time staff** who will be sanitizing and disinfecting all bathrooms and high touch points in all buildings. Disinfecting of high touch surfaces will also occur during each school day.

Water fountains have been disabled and we are asking students to bring their own water bottle.

Electric hand dryers in our bathrooms have been disconnected and **paper towels** will be made available for drying hands in accordance with the State's guidance.

A **Kinsa Smart Thermometer** was provided to any family that requested one as part of our summer Mobile Meals Program to any family that requested one. We are asking all our families to conduct daily temperature checks prior to students coming to school. If families would like a thermometer, they can contact their building administrator.

Students in school who are COVID-19 symptomatic will be moved to an **isolation room** for immediate pickup.

We will continue to be vigilant and respond as quickly as possible as circumstances change and follow the guidance we receive from the State, our Public Health Officials, the Centers for Disease Control, etc. We will also remain in regular consultation with our district physician, – Dr. Domenic Casablanca.

Measures the Ansonia Public Schools Considered and Rejected, with Rationale

- **Temperature screenings at schools:** Our medical staff, Naugatuck Valley Health District, and the Department of Public Health (DPH) advised against it because of potential for false readings, discouraging groups congregating together to be screened, and the false sense of security that no temperature means that "I can't spread the virus leading to less mask-wearing".

- HEPA filters in classrooms: Our medical staff, Naugatuck Valley Health District, and the Department of Public Health (DPH) advised against it. DPH said, "*We do not recommend separate, free-standing air cleaner or HEPA filter units for individual classrooms. These units are highly variable in their effectiveness in larger open spaces such as classrooms and in general, any effect on indoor air quality is likely insignificant and greatly outweighed by the additional costs to school systems*". A survey was sent to partner districts and those districts rejected the use of air purifiers in classrooms. We instead invested in providing more outdoor space via tents.
- COVID testing: Again, universally rejected. Districts pursued testing large groups through a saliva test called pool testing. When we inquired about this testing mechanism we were informed that the false readings were too high to be meaningful at this time. For traditional nasal testing, there is a limited amount of reagent (the chemicals needed to test). Testing everyone will make it harder for sick people to be identified which is obviously counterproductive.
- Sought out additional space: We looked at other buildings in town, but the space had either environmental issues or these spaces needed to be retrofitted for classroom purposes. The combination of the cost associated and the time it would take to retrofit buildings has negated this option.
- Desk partitions/screens for every desk: In examining this proposal with our medical staff, the screens are deemed to have very limited effectiveness. In order for them to be effective, they would need to basically go floor to ceiling. Masks are far more effective in limiting the spread.

I know no one will be happy until COVID-19 has been eradicated and our schools and lives are back to normal. Meanwhile, I hope that the information provided helps you feel more comfortable with your child's return to school!

Sincerely,



Dr. Joseph DiBacco
Superintendent of Schools