

August 11, 2021

Dear East Hartford Community,

Greetings! I hope your summer break was restful and relaxing! With two weeks remaining in summer vacation, I wanted to reach out and share some important information as we all prepare for our first day of school on August 25, 2021.

As messaged last spring, in alignment with guidance from Governor Lamont, the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS), the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), and the East Hartford Department of Public Health (EHDPH), East Hartford Public Schools (EHPS) **will welcome all students back to school this fall as In-Person Learners**. Over the past few months our district has been hard at work preparing our schools for the year ahead and we have appreciated the individual feedback, questions and comments we have received from you.

We recognize that for the vast majority of our families, the return of all students to In-Person Learning is another positive step toward the norms enjoyed prior to the pandemic. As we all carefully monitor the impact of the Delta variant, we are also aware of emerging concerns regarding the health and safety of your children and our community. As we have throughout the pandemic, we will continue to work to provide your children with a high-quality education in a *safe, incremental, and adaptive* environment. We are eager to work with you and encourage you to reach out to your school principal to discuss any specific concerns or questions.

This communication serves to summarize our comprehensive [Back to School '22 Plan](#) which builds off of our experiences last year as we operated our schools throughout the pandemic. The following bullets summarize key aspects of the plan. Please note that this plan is based on the most current information provided by the nation's leading health and regulatory agencies. As a school district, we strongly maintain the position that we will continue to follow the guidance of these experts as we work to safely educate our students.

#### **Back to School '22 Summary/Highlights:**

- *Return to In-Person Learning:* Designed to return all students (PK-12) for In-Person instruction on August 25, 2021, Back to School '22 is grounded in the data and science of the foremost leading public health experts. Inclusive of an intensive approach to virus mitigation and containment, this plan provides the highest level of educational access for students in the safest format possible. While provisions will be made aligned to specific and documented health and special education needs, a remote option for students will not be provided.
- *Vaccination Programming:* Getting vaccinated is the most effective way to keep your child and our community safe. If you or your child are eligible for vaccination and have not done so, we strongly urge you to take advantage of this opportunity to halt the virus.
- *Self-Screening/Feel Sick/Stay Home:* All staff and students are required to conduct a self-screening prior to coming to school or work. This process can be assisted using the [Coronavirus Self Checker](#) provided by the CDC. If unvaccinated staff or students feel any of the symptoms related to COVID-19, they should remain home and consult with their medical provider for testing and care.
- *Mask Requirement:* Pursuant to [Executive Order 13](#) which extends and renews [Executive Order 12A](#) through September 30, 2021, masks must be worn indoors by all individuals (age 2 and older) regardless of vaccination status. Per CDC guidance, exceptions will be provided for anyone who has

a documented medical condition making it unsafe to wear a face covering. Please note that if your child does not wear a mask in school, you will be required to take your child home.

- *Physical/Social Distancing:* EHPS will make every effort possible to maintain 3 feet of spacing between students in classrooms. It should be noted that maintaining the space parameters that existed during SY20-21 are no longer feasible with all students returning in person. EHPS will not exclude students from in-person learning in order to meet minimum distance recommendations.
- *Isolation/Quarantine/Notification of Exposure:* EHPS will continue to follow the isolation/quarantine procedures provided by the CDC. As such, all unvaccinated students and staff who are experiencing COVID-like symptoms or have been deemed a close contact will be required to quarantine for the assigned period. Close contacts that occur at school will be notified directly by the school nurse and general communications will be posted for the community on the [COVID Notifications Tab of the EHPS website](#).
- *Virtual Learning:* Students who are placed in mandatory quarantine will be provided an opportunity to participate in a virtual learning experience. Approval to participate in virtual learning is based on administrative approval and will not be used for general absences, vacations or student learning preferences.
- *Visitor Policy:* In alignment with current guidance from the CDC, EHPS will limit visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups to the school buildings. Access will not be restricted to direct service/essential providers regardless of vaccination status. Parents will be permitted to visit schools to attend meetings or conduct required business. All visitors should be aware of, and comply with, mitigation strategies in use inside the school building.

Despite the precautions that this communication details, we are extremely excited to have your child back in school. We believe the planning and detailed approach that we have taken will sustain us as we move forward and appreciate your flexibility and support in advance.

As we enjoy the last few days of summer, we all feel those butterflies of excitement for our first-year kindergartners, the nerves of our sixth graders as they enter middle school, and the hopes of our high school seniors. Back to School '22 is another chance for EHPS to tell *Our Story* to our community, our state, and our world about a school district that pulled together and pulled for each other in a time where it mattered most. We are all characters in the story and will have important parts of a challenging, scary, exhilarating and eventually victorious plot. I am looking forward to working with you this year and to making a difference for our kids!

Let's get to telling!



Nathan D. Quesnel

*Superintendent*

East Hartford Public Schools