

## **Frequently Asked Questions Simsbury Public Schools Reopening 2021-22**

### **Q: What is the schedule for the start of the school year?**

A: Wednesday, September 1st through Friday, September 3rd will be early release days for students. This will help students transition from last year's school model into the current year.

### **Q: Will remote learning be an option for students during the 2021-22 school year?**

A: Legislatively, we will not have an option for students to participate in full distance learning this year ([CSDE Guidance Regarding the Future of Remote Learning in CT Schools](#)). Additionally, the CT State Department of Education (CSDE) prohibits the provision of remote snow days for 2021-22.

### **Q: Will there be regular COVID testing at school?**

A: You may have seen in the news that CT is offering free testing for unvaccinated, asymptomatic students. In consultation with the FVHD, we have decided not to access screening testing at this time, as the intention of the program is to target low vaccination/high case-count communities. In communities that opt for this program, testing requires parental consent and would be conducted during the school day; however, the benefit of such a program would require a very high percentage of families to consent to such testing. Should conditions change such that this screening testing option would result in greater benefit, we will reconsider the opportunity. Additionally, we know that diagnostic testing in our area is readily available at a [variety of sites](#).

### **Q: Why do I need to provide a copy of my child's vaccination card?**

A: The CDC and DPH continue to promote vaccines as the most effective mitigation strategy to address COVID and to ensure continuity of in-person learning. To facilitate the most efficient contact tracing process and quickly determine the extent to which quarantining is required for those deemed close contacts to a positive case, we are asking all staff and families to share vaccination cards with us.

### **Q: Will face masks be required?**

A: The Governor's [Executive Order 13A](#), is in place until September 30, 2021. The order states that *regardless of vaccination status*, masks must be worn in multiple locations, including schools. Further, during meetings with the DPH and FVHD, both agencies made mask recommendations in alignment with this order. Therefore, please send your child to school each day with a clean mask, as wearing them will be required of anyone while in our school buildings.

### **Q: What if my child cannot wear a mask for medical reasons?**

A: Executive Order No. 7NNN states that any person who declines to wear a mask or face covering because of a medical condition shall be exempt from this order, but only if such person provides written documentation that the person is qualified for the exemption from a licensed medical provider, the Department of Developmental Services, or other state agency that provides or supports services for people with emotional, intellectual, or physical disabilities, or a person authorized by any such agency. Such documentation need not name or describe the condition that qualifies the person for the exemption. BOE [Policy 5136](#) can be found on the district website and includes the necessary paperwork that needs to be completed.

**Q: Will mask breaks be scheduled for students and staff, and how will that be accommodated?**

A: As was the case last year, students will be given the opportunity for mask breaks over the course of the day. Additionally, masks are not required when students are outside, and cohorting outside is no longer required.

**Q: What will happen if a student or adult in the school building becomes ill during the course of the day?**

A: Students who become symptomatic during the course of school day will be separated from others immediately and assessed by the school nurse. Students exhibiting symptoms will be required to continue to wear a mask and wait in a supervised, designated isolation area through which others do not enter until the student has left for home. If more than one student is in the isolation area, physical distancing will be maintained. The school nurse will have a plan for treating other students in the health office, recognizing that not all symptoms are COVID-19 related.

**Q: When can an ill student or staff member return to school?**

A: Students will be allowed to return 24 hours after symptoms resolve without the use of fever-reducing medicines, or with a note from their healthcare provider.

**Q: How long does my child need to stay home if they are not feeling well?**

A: If a school community member is displaying any symptoms of illness, we ask those individuals to stay home until symptom-free for 24 hours without the use of medicinal intervention. The FVHD encourages the testing of symptomatic individuals.

**Q: How will contact tracing and quarantining be handled for those vaccinated and unvaccinated?**

A: Contact tracing will continue to be implemented as a mitigation strategy. We will follow CDC guidelines for that process. We anticipate that should quarantines be required, we will be utilizing the CDC option for those in quarantine to test on day 5 of the quarantine for a return to in-person instruction on day 8, should that test return be negative. If one chooses not to test, then quarantine will be 10 days. Final determinations about quarantine will be made by the FVHD. At this time, if a vaccinated

individual is a close contact and asymptomatic, no quarantining is necessary. If an individual is not vaccinated, the individual will require quarantining.

**Q: What will remote learning look like if my child needs to quarantine?**

A: Any student quarantined by the FVHD will be given instructional access to their classroom(s). Targeted instruction for grades K-2, 3-6 and 7-12 will be provided. Details outlining those particulars are forthcoming from principals.

**Q: What is the policy for visitors to the school buildings?**

A: Visitors will be permitted in school buildings through the main office.

**Q: What is the process if I choose to homeschool my child(ren)?**

A: A [Notice of Intent](#) form must be completed and sent to the Office of the Superintendent. The form will serve as your formal notification of intent to homeschool, and will be reviewed and signed by the Superintendent. In addition, you must fill out a [withdrawal form](#) and submit it to your child's school principal.

**Q: Will students be socially distanced in classrooms?**

A: The CDC now recommends three feet of physical distance between students within classrooms when possible, combined with indoor mask wearing, to reduce transmission risk.

**Q: How will students store their personal belongings at school?**

A: At the elementary schools desks have been purchased that include a cubby space for personal belongings. Where applicable, students will have access to lockers this year.

**Q: How will cafeterias be set up to maximize social distancing?**

A: At the elementary level, students will have lunch in the school cafeteria and outside when possible. Students will have assigned seating with members of their classroom. Social distancing, plexiglass cashier stations, and touchpad sanitation will be utilized. At HJMS there will be 3 lunch waves and teams will be assigned an area to eat. Each lunchwave holds one grade-level team. At SHS there will be 3 lunch waves to begin the year and seating will be provided in the cafeteria, amphitheater and outdoors. Both HJMS and SHS will again have tents erected to accommodate outdoor seating.

**Q: Will school breakfast and lunch be offered at no charge again this year?**

A: Once again the Simsbury Public Schools has obtained a waiver and USDA funding in order to provide meals at no cost to all students. This program includes breakfast and lunch. Additionally, all of our cafeterias will return to selling additional a la carte items that have proven to be popular with students.

**Q: Will music classes be held in music classrooms this year? Will there be instrument instruction?**

A: Music classes will be held in music classrooms this year, and teachers will also make frequent use of outdoor spaces. Instrumental lessons will take place at the elementary schools. Concerts and large ensembles will not take place to start off the school year.

**Q: Where will art instruction and physical education take place at the elementary schools?**

A: Art classes will move back to the art teacher classrooms. PE classes will utilize the outdoors and the school gym.

**Q: How will students maintain social distancing on school buses?**

A: Students will no longer be required to sit only with family members. Individual elementary schools will develop bus seating plans that will be communicated to families. Students are permitted to only ride on their assigned bus to and from school. The Governor's [Executive Order 13A](#) requires that masks be worn on buses.

**Q: Will extracurricular activities and athletics be offered?**

A: In person extracurricular activities will resume for the 2021-22 school year. The CT Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) has provided [guidance](#) for fall sports which will once again be held in-person.

**Q: Will cleaning protocols be the same as last year?**

A: Contaminated surfaces are no longer thought to be a significant contributor to the spread of COVID. The CDC has moved away from the idea of over-disinfection in schools. The DPH has advised that routine daily cleaning of schools (consistent with standard school cleaning practices) and disinfection of bathrooms, locker rooms, cafeterias and health offices, is sufficient to prevent the transmission of COVID.

**Q: Will the district continue to address ventilation in schools?**

A: The district will continue to contract with an engineering firm to review the operations and functionality of all HVAC system components in our school facilities and make adjustments as needed.

**Q: Will students participate in field trips this school year?**

A: Field trips will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to ascertain the extent to which mitigation strategies can be readily implemented and replicated.

**Q: Will community groups be allowed to use school facilities?**

A: School facilities will be open for public use on a case-by-case basis as approved by the Business Office. School protocols will need to be followed by members of the public when in school buildings.

For the full Simsbury Public Schools Reopening Plan, refer to the [District's reopening plan](#) or visit the [Coronavirus Update page of our website](#).