

Dear Simsbury Staff and Parents/Guardians,

As we reach the end of another week of distance learning, it looks like we are going to get a beautiful weekend to enjoy. I hope that you are able to take advantage of some outdoor time with your family.

Now that we have the Governor's decision to keep schools closed for the rest of this year, I wanted to let you know about our district's planning efforts to address the myriad of issues involved in reopening our schools when the time comes. Given the uncertainty of what K-12 schooling will look like in the fall, we need to consider all three possibilities: 1) schools fully reopened with proper health and safety protocols in place, 2) schools closed and a continuation of distance learning, or 3) a hybrid model in which some students are in school while others stay home to allow for social distancing. All of these possibilities are in discussion at the state level, and the guidance we are getting continues to evolve on an almost daily basis.

As Superintendent, I have formed two parallel teams of professionals that will lead our reopening plans. The first is the Return to Simsbury Schools Task Force and is being chaired by Neil Sullivan, Director of Personnel. This group will focus on the operational decisions and logistics that need to be in place for a safe return to school. Membership on this group includes leaders from our various departments: custodial/maintenance, health services, transportation, technology, finances, security, human resources, and mental health supports. In addition, we have representation from the teachers' association as well as administrators at all levels (elementary, middle, high, and preschool). The RSS Task Force held its first meeting this past Monday and will be convening weekly as our plans ramp up. Of course, we have more questions than answers right now, but I am very confident that we've created the right structure and put together the right people to take on this huge responsibility. I will be reporting out on the work of this group throughout the summer.

In addition, we have formed the Reopen Simsbury Teaching and Learning Team, chaired by Erin Murray, Assistant Superintendent. With the distinct possibility that distance learning will continue in some form this fall, we need to take advantage of the lessons learned from the past few months in order to refine and improve the instruction we are delivering to students. In addition, we know that the transition back to traditional classroom learning will come with its own challenges, and the Teaching and Learning team will be looking into both closing academic gaps and the needed emphasis on social-emotional learning as students return to school. The work of this team will unfold in tiers involving administrators, curricular leaders and department supervisors, classroom teachers, and special educators. Survey results about distance learning from teachers, parents, and students have and will be tremendously helpful as this team begins its analysis.

As I communicate with various members of the community, it is abundantly clear to me just how much our teachers miss their students and how much our students miss their teachers. We all look forward to the time when schools can safely reopen, and I hope this communication offers you some comfort that we are working hard to plan for the new normal that will take shape in our district. Until then, stay well!

Sincerely,

Matt Curtis  
Superintendent of Schools