



Colchester School District

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CSD Community,

Last week, the Agency of Education in conjunction with the Department of Health, released a [revised edition of the guidance](#) that schools must follow in their reopening plans. During the press conference, they stressed the importance of having students in grades kindergarten through grade five return to full in-person instruction if COVID-19 cases remain low following the reopening of schools. Here in Colchester, we understand their statements and the science and rationale behind them. If COVID-19 cases in our area remain low, we believe *transitioning* to full in-person learning for grades K-5 may be possible.

We are going to continue with our plan to open in a hybrid learning model. So much about school is going to be different this year and we feel strongly that we need to first welcome our students and staff back to ease in and acclimate to all of the new routines and procedures. This will allow us to assess the overall implementation of our reopening plan before we consider bringing students back full time. Regardless if we're hybrid or fully in-person, we want to assure the families who chose full-time virtual learning that it will continue to be an option for them.

Following guidance from the Vermont Agency of Education and Vermont Department of Health, this "phased approach" to full in-person learning for grades K-5 allows for schools to minimize risk and develop new routines. It will also provide time for the Department of Health to demonstrate their ability to respond to positive cases. It is important to note that this phased approach will only happen if the spread of the virus remains contained and the guidance from the Agency of Education and the Department of Health does not change.

Here are some answers to questions that we've received. If your question hasn't been answered, it was either given to a specific reopening committee for consideration or it will be answered in an upcoming FAQ when we have more information. If you'd like to submit a question you can do so using our [Reopening CSD Questions Portal](#).

Q: Have you finalized changes to the school calendar? Is it posted online so I can see it?

A: There were several spots on the calendar where a day off resulted in the week being unbalanced in the amount of in-person days for one of the learning groups (Blue/Lakers or Green/Champs). One example of this is the first week of school. There is no school on Labor Day, Monday, September 7. That means that the Blue/Laker group only gets one in-person day that week (Tuesday). To ensure our students have an equal amount of in-person opportunities, we have adjusted the schedule in several places. Here are the finalized changes so far:

- Wednesday, September 9th is now an IN-PERSON day for the Blue/Laker group.
- Friday, October 16th will be an IN-PERSON for the Green/Champ group.

- Tuesday, December 22 will be an IN-PERSON day for the Green/Champ group and a REMOTE LEARNING day for the Blue/Laker Group.

The last date we're looking into for the first semester is the presidential election. There is currently no school on Tuesday, November 3rd. It is *possible* we will have the Blue/Laker group attend IN-PERSON on Wednesday, November 4th to get their two in-person days that week. However, that has not been decided yet. We will evaluate the calendar for the second half of the school year as we get closer to it. To view the most updated calendar you can always visit the [calendar page on our website](#).

Q: I have a K-5 student and we plan to use a district device at home for the remote learning days. Can we pick up our device before school starts?

A: Yes. We are hoping to have all the K-5 devices ready to go by the middle of next week. We'll send out a separate email when they're ready so if families want to pick them up before the start of school, they can. Please note that students who are using district devices at home for remote days MUST bring them to school on their in-person days. That device will be the same device they use in class. Picking up your child's device prior to school starting isn't required and you can always wait until your student's first in-person day to get it.

Q: I still have a district device at home from the spring that I kept over the summer. Do I need to do anything with it before school starts?

A: In most cases, no. Just make sure your child brings it with them on the first day of school. However, there are two grade levels that MUST turn in their device from last year to get a new one. We ask that you do this as soon as possible so we can prepare to redistribute them to students who need them.

- If you had a kindergartener in the spring who was given an iPad, we need you to turn it in. As a 1st grader this year, they will be receiving a Chromebook.
- If you had a 5th grader in the spring who was given an MBS Chromebook, we need you to turn it in. Now that they are in 6th grade, they will be given a CMS Chromebook.

Q: With nearly 2 weeks left until school starts, what are some things I could do to help my child get used to wearing a mask?

A: The more you can practice with your child, the better. Here's a great 1-minute video with a pediatrician at the UVM Children's Hospital: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddBX4IB83t4>

Q: Are there still positions that need to be filled at the schools?

A: YES! If you know anyone looking for work, we are still looking to hire paraeducators in a number of roles and schools. Paraeducators are an incredibly important part of the school system and we are actively hiring for our open positions. If you'd like to see a full list of all of our openings, visit www.csdvt.org/jobs. We are also looking to round out our substitute teaching list. Substitute teachers make \$120 per day. If you or someone you know is interested, visit www.csdvt.org/sub or contact Amy Silverston in our HR Department at amy.silverston@colchestersd.org or (802) 264-5976.

Q: Do the schools have air filtration systems?

A: Yes, all five schools have air filtration systems. The district has been working with an outside vendor for the last 15 years in providing preventative maintenance in all schools. Filters (MERV 8 to 13) are replaced three times a year allowing for quality air and air flow. We believe that the existing HVAC system, while older in some cases, provides quality air and allows for a comfortable learning and working environment for our students and staff. The district is currently working with Efficiency Vermont to see if we qualify for a grant under the \$6.5 million allocated through the CARES Act.

Q: Can my middle schooler or high schooler ride the bus whenever they need to? For example, I can transport them by car in the morning but they may need to ride the bus home. Do we need to ask anyone ahead of time?

A: While we are encouraging families to arrange transportation for their students whenever possible to allow those who must ride the bus more space, we want to stress that the bus will always be an option for a student to get to school or to get back home. If your child needs to ride the bus on a specific day, there will always be room for them to do so. Depending on their grade level and the specific dismissal procedures of the building they attend, they may or may not need to alert a staff member that they will be riding the bus home that day. Buildings will communicate those requirements directly.

Q: Will snow days or other weather-related closures become remote learning days?

A: Quite frankly, we're impressed at how far ahead some of our families are thinking! Having a remote day instead of a snow day is definitely a possibility. While the topic has certainly come up, we are currently focused on the complex task of reopening of school and haven't made any decisions about how that could work quite yet. Stay tuned!

Lastly, a big welcome back to our faculty and staff! We kicked off the school year with our annual opening in-service yesterday morning. The district nurses and I led over 300 faculty and staff through a four-hour interactive Zoom presentation going over our reopening plan. We celebrated milestone work anniversaries, poured over the State's guidance and local decisions that our administrators have made, did a deep dive into the layers of health and safety measures put in place, and answered lots of great questions from our employees. It was wonderful to reconnect with everyone and it has been awesome to feel how their presence has increased in energy in our school buildings.

Be well,

Amy Minor
Superintendent of Schools