



Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan

(Update 12/23)

Ledyard Public Schools - 2023/2024 SY

Per the guidance from the CT State Department of Education (CSDE) and the federal government, Ledyard Public Schools (LPS) has created this *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan*. The CSDE Guidelines require districts to consider five areas when developing this plan:

- Health and Safety Strategies
- Continuity of Services
- Public Comment
- Periodic Review Process
- Understandable and Uniform Format

This plan is a modification for the 2023-2024 school year of the original 2020-2021 school year document that was developed by school-based teams and district-wide committees. Per Federal requirements, this plan will be reviewed at a minimum of every six (6) months and will be further revised based on faculty and staff feedback, parent feedback, and Board of Education guidance. The plan will continue to be modified based on science, guidelines and issues of importance to our students, team members and our community. As data, practices, and guidelines change our plan will be adjusted to ensure maximum safety for our students and team members.

The structure of this plan mirrors the CSDE's [Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan](#) reopening guidance released on May 27, 2021 (last available update). For the school year 2022-2023 the CSDE released "[Launching into Healthy Learning - Operational Strategies - Fall 2022](#)."

Public Comment

Public comment is a key element of stakeholder engagement, and at times a stand-alone element which may include dedicating time to open forums at board of education meetings, conducting surveys, or soliciting written input from external residents not involved in the decision-making process. Feedback on the plan will be received through a dedicated COVID-19 email address covidinfo@ledyard.net.

Periodic Review

LPS will periodically review and, as appropriate, revise the *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan* at least every six (6) months through June 23, 2024. Each review will include seeking public comment on the *draft* plan under revision and making adjustments as necessary after taking into account the public comment/feedback.

Substantive changes made to this plan in December 2023, have been highlighted.

Below are the dates that LPS is required to submit a *final* refreshed or updated plan to CSDE via eGMS.

- June 23, 2021
- December 23, 2021
- June 23, 2022
- December 23, 2022
- June 23, 2023
- December 23, 2023
- June 23, 2024

Understandable and Uniform Format

Federal regulations require that this plan be in an understandable and uniform format, to the extent practicable; is written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable, orally translated; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability, provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent.

LPS will provide the plan in an accessible PDF document available on the district's website and upon request through email. The plan will have clear headings, and as appropriate, have specifics based on school building needs as well as appropriate links.

Health and Safety Strategies

CSDE has provided specific topics for districts to address as part of their mitigation plan. Specific strategies and requirements may change based on guidance from local, state and federal health authorities.

“Given the widespread availability of COVID-19 vaccines, at-home COVID-19 testing, medications to treat COVID-19, and our collective experience mitigating the spread of COVID-19 in our schools over the last two years,” Ledyard transitioned the management of COVID-19 in our schools from “a pandemic emergency response model to a model that aligns with the public health approach to routine management and control of respiratory viral diseases.” (DPM Memo, 2/18/22)

Vaccination

LPS does not require employees and contractors to provide proof of vaccination status or submission of weekly COVID-19 testing to be permitted in a school facility. Per DPH recommendations LPS continues to encourage vaccination for eligible individuals.

Mask Wearing

The State of CT, DPH and CSDE no longer require universal mask wearing in public school buildings. Upon expiration of this mandate on February 28, 2022, by vote of the Ledyard Board of Education, LPS no longer requires universal masking. Masking is a family or individual choice that will be supported, but not monitored or enforced by LPS faculty/staff/administration. Masks are recommended should a student or staff member have mild symptoms, although they have tested negative. Masks may be required while in the nurse's office for an issue related to a respiratory illness.

[Face Covering Protocol](#)

Physical Distancing

LPS is no longer practicing social distancing, it has moved to personal space that is best aligned to a person's comfort. It should not be expected that students will be able to maintain distancing at all times.

- PreK-5 - Students will be minimally cohorted by grade levels.
- Ledyard Middle School - LMS will operate with the schedule approved by the Ledyard Board of Education. Students will not be cohorted.
- Ledyard High School - LHS will operate with the A/B Block Schedule formerly in operation during the 2019-2020 School Year. Students will not be cohorted.

A “cohort” is a group or team of students and staff who stay together throughout the course of the day. A “pod” is a small group of students who will be placed together across a variety of settings.

In classes such as music/choral/instrumental performance, droplet control measures will no longer be required.

Volunteers and Visitors

LPS maintains a deep desire to partner with outside agencies, community members and most of all our families. LPS will no longer limit general access to the school buildings when our students are present. Volunteers in support of educational programming may be permitted inside LPS schools with Principal approval. Volunteers should continue to self-screen for symptoms of COVID-19. [CDC Symptom Self-Screening](#)

Parent meetings during the school day may still be held virtually; in-person meetings may be held.

Regulations about group events, athletics will continue to be evaluated on a case by case basis by the school principal and district administration.

LPS will follow CT DPH guidance for students participating in athletics for the 2023-24 school year. See “Isolation and Quarantine” below.

Transportation

In accordance with current CDC Order, effective February 25, 2022, masking is not required for people riding on buses or vans operated by public or private school systems, including early care and education/child care programs. Students will no longer be spaced out to accommodate social distancing. In order to maintain access to school, in the event of a severe driver shortage, routes may be consolidated or delayed. Notice of consolidation or delay will be provided as quickly as possible but will most often be during the operational period of concern.

Requests for students to be transported on different AM and PM bus runs must be submitted in advance and in writing to the school. These will be reviewed and approved based on space availability within the bus. Forms are available in the Main Office at each school.

Cafeterias and Meal Periods

District schools will continue full operational use of cafeteria space.

Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette

Handwashing is the preferred method of hand hygiene, but in cases where handwashing is not feasible hand sanitizer will be made available.

Cover coughs and sneezes:

- If you are wearing a mask: You can cough or sneeze into your mask. Put on a new, clean mask as soon as possible and wash your hands.
- If you are not wearing a mask:
 - Always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or use the inside of your elbow and do not spit.
 - Throw used tissues in the trash. (Source: CDC)

Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities, Including Improving Ventilation

LPS has an adequate supply of soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, and trash cans. There is an inventory that is being monitored and replenished based on demand.

Each teacher may request hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes be available for use in their classroom. Soap/detergent cleaners are recommended by DPH, sanitizing wipes are not necessary for COVID-19 cleaning.

PPE has been purchased and received for various contingencies. Per direction of CSDE, if required/desired, parents are expected to provide their child with a mask to wear on the bus and at school. Should a family need assistance with providing their student a mask, LPS continues to be prepared to support the need.

Each LPS facility has an independent air handling system:

- Gales Ferry School, Gallup Hill School and Ledyard Middle School - The HVAC system/Building Management System has been adjusted to meet fresh air recommendations and ventilation of the building each evening. HEPA Filters have been installed and are changed based on manufacturer recommendations.
- Juliet W. Long School - In the summer of 2020, LPS installed variable speed roof top fans to ventilate the building and increase air exchange. JW Long has been approved by the BOE for an HVAC installation. The process is underway and is managed by the Town Permanent Municipal Building Committee (PMBC). There has not been a completion commitment as of Dec 2023.
- Ledyard High School - In the summer of 2020, LPS installed new variable speed roof top fans that had been previously inoperable to ventilate the building and increase air exchange.

Preventive maintenance checks will be done on a regular basis by the Facilities Department.

Isolation and Quarantine

Since the official end of the COVID Public Health Emergency nationally and in Connecticut last May, previous Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance for isolation and quarantine that was specifically advised by CT Department of Public

Health policy to be followed in schools are now only recommendations. LPS continues to advise all parents and guardians to encourage their children to follow public health best practices as they have always done for hygiene.

Parents of students who have symptoms of COVID, have been exposed to COVID, or who have tested positive for COVID should consult their child's primary care provider for guidance, diagnosis, or treatment as they would for any other respiratory illness.

As with other illnesses, students are encouraged to stay at home if they are exhibiting symptoms of any infectious disease such as fever, not feeling well and coughing regardless of the cause of the respiratory illness. Students with fever and other significant respiratory symptoms will continue to be excluded from school as with other viral respiratory infections.

LPS recognizes the importance of having a central contact and an effective communication plan to provide effective outreach to stakeholders, families, staff, and community partners. Building principals will serve as the primary school-based liaison. Health related questions should be referred to the school nurse assigned to your child's school. Other questions may be referred to the District Operations Director, Mike Fusaro, at COVIDinfo@ledyard.net or 860-464-9255 extension 1501. LPS adheres to guidance provided by the district's medical advisor and requirements from LLHD, DPH and CSDE.

Enhanced mitigation strategies for outbreak control

When a school suspects an outbreak of COVID-19 among students or staff, LPS will contact LLHD health officials immediately. Local health departments can assist schools in determining if a COVID-19 outbreak is suspected and what, if any, outbreak response strategies are needed to control transmission.

COVID19 Dashboard/Reporting

Based on Governor Lamont's declaration that effective May 11th, 2023, Connecticut's COVID-19 public health emergency has ended, LPS will no longer maintain a COVID-19 Dashboard. The number of positive cases in the district will not be tracked for the 2023-24 school year.

Diagnostic Screenings and Testing

[Click Here to connect with 2.1.1 of CT for up to date testing information.](#)

Efforts to Provide Vaccinations to Educators, Other Staff, and Students

[Click Here to connect with the CT Vaccine Portal.](#)

Appropriate Accommodations for Children with Disabilities with Respect to the Health and Safety Policies

The parent/guardian of any student requiring an accommodation should contact their school principal. LPS will work in collaboration with parents/guardians to develop an appropriate plan that aligns with State and Federal mandates and requirements through a Planning and Placement Team Meeting or 504 meeting as required.

Continuity of Services

LPS successfully completed a multi-tiered return to school plan in the 2020-21 school year. Grades Pre-K to 5 returned to full schooling with a small number of students continuing to opt out of in-person instruction during the school year 2020-2021 with dedicated virtual teachers. Grades 6-12 returned four days per week with Wednesday virtual instruction to allow for additional planning time due to the continued need for both in-person and virtual instruction by classroom teachers.

In the Fall of 2021, students returned to five (5) days per week of in-person instruction. Per State guidance LPS will not be providing Virtual Learning/Opt Out in 2021-2022. Remote learning is not permitted for inclement weather days per State Law and CSDE Guidance.

In the Fall of 2022, students will continue with five (5) days per week of in-person instruction. Per State guidance LPS will not be providing Virtual Learning/Opt Out in 2022-2023. Remote learning is not permitted for inclement weather days per State Law and CSDE Guidance.

Academic Needs

LPS recognizes that the disruption to learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented in its nature and scope. In preparation for integrating all students back into school in Fall of 2021, teams of teachers worked to adjust the curriculum and intentionally plan for the first thirty days or first unit of study. This ensures potential gaps in learning will be addressed and lead to a high probability of success. Based on the success of Fall 2020, LPS adjusted the model to meet the needs of students in the Fall of 2021. This included a modified “First 30 Days” program.

Strong emphasis will be placed on differentiated instruction.

PreK-5 teachers and certified staff will maintain a presence and post on SeeSaw (PreK-2) and in Google Classroom (3-5). Secondary/Grade 6-12 teachers and certified staff will post assignments and resources digitally on Google Classroom. In the event that students are placed in quarantine, they will be marked absent and able to access assignments through the appropriate platform and/or age-appropriate handouts/materials made available at the school within 48 hours. All absent students will be given the opportunity to make up the work during their absence or upon their return to school.

In keeping with CSDE Guidelines, remote instruction is not available. Students absent from school will be provided with materials and supported upon their return to school, but will not be instructed remotely. State law now prohibits teachers from “dual instruction.”

Field trips may be approved by the principal per Board Policy.

Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs for Students and Staff

LPS recognizes the importance of supporting social, emotional, and mental health needs of students and staff. At the elementary level, Connected, Respected & Celebrated lessons will be updated to include more SEL (Social Emotional Learning) themes and there will be a daily 15-minute classroom community meeting added to the master schedule. LMS and LHS will continue to utilize and expand on their SEL advisory lessons.

District-wide, teams of teachers will participate in ongoing professional development relating to the social and emotional challenges and how best to support students through PBIS and other resources.

In 2021 and enhanced for the 22-23 SY:

Gallup Hill School added an additional mental health clinician to support the social, emotional and mental health needs of students. For the 2022-23 SY, GHS added an additional clinician to support outpatient services (Insurance Based).

Gales Ferry/Juliet W. Long School added a full-time school psychologist to support the social, emotional and mental health needs of students.

Gales Ferry School added a K-2 special education teacher to support the social, emotional and mental health needs of students.

Ledyard Middle School added an additional mental health clinician to support tier 2 students in a new program offered by Effective School Solutions (ESS), a current offering at LHS. For the 2022-23 SY, LMS added an additional guidance counselor.

Ledyard High School added a Special Education teacher to support the social emotional support program, for the 2022-23 SY.

Student Health and Food Services

For the 2023-24 school year, all students will receive breakfast meals at no cost and students who are eligible for reduced-price meals will receive a lunch at no cost; see [Free & Reduced Lunch Information](#) to apply.

Menus are posted on our website, Ledyard.net. All schools are serving fresh lunch options to students. Supply chain issues may limit some choices and menus may need to be modified/adjusted.