

Voluntown Public Schools



DRAFT

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

2021-2022

Voluntown Elementary School

195 Main St.

Voluntown, CT 06384

Based on the Connecticut State Department of Education Guidelines

Date of Submission:	June 23, 2021
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June 22, 2021

Our school system is committed to supporting the children of our town. The past year and a half has proven to be a challenging time as we all navigated the complexities of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In our Voluntown PreK through 8th Grade school we provided a mostly full in-person learning model for the 2020-2021 school year. Various mitigation strategies were used to support our efforts to maintain an in-person learning model. Cohorting allowed us to minimize the impact when a COVID case touched the school community. We believe that mask wearing and social distancing were key factors in helping to minimize the spread within our schools. Any cases came from activities far away from the school.

We are now planning strategies for the next school year. Voluntown will not be offering a fully remote learning option in 2021-22. It is likely we will be required to continue various mitigation strategies as mandated by the SDE and DPH. Our goal is for children, families, and staff to remain as safe as possible while engaging in educational opportunities. The following document shall be considered a live and ever-evolving plan that will be adjusted according to developing research and guidance from the State Department of Education.


Please note that our school system does not have a high school. Therefore our Eighth graders have a choice of 8 different schools: Norwich Free Academy, Griswold, Wheeler, Ellis Tech, Norwich Tech, Killingly Ag, Marine Science Magnet High School, and Quinebaug Middle College.

We appreciate the commitment and flexibility of our faculty and staff, children and families as we continue to navigate learning during this historical time in our lives.

Your feedback is always welcomed. Please feel free to share your thoughts at aburrows@voluntownct.org.

Sincerely,

Adam S. Burrows, Superintendent of Schools
Voluntown Public Schools



In planning for the safe return to in-person learning in the Voluntown school system, it has been essential to envision the safest environment and the highest quality instruction for the school community. Based on guidelines provided to school districts from the Connecticut State Department of Education and the State of Connecticut, **Voluntown Elementary School is currently planning to continue with a full In-Person Learning Model that was successfully implemented in 2020-2021.** Like last year, the plan is intended to be a fluid document that will evolve based on the public health data and research available to mitigate the spread of the virus. As we proceed toward the fall, we will continue to receive input from our educational partners, students, and families and will continue to work toward providing the best opportunities for our greatest resource—the students in the State of Connecticut.

An “In-Person Learning Model” refers to the desire to have all students and all staff return in the fall for a full-length traditional day of school with necessary modifications given the pandemic.

A “safe” reopening refers to adherence to expectations and guidelines from the State of Connecticut, the CDC, the local health officials (UNCAS Health District), and other sources that will be in place to ensure that the schools’ environments support learning during this time of COVID 19. Rates of positive COVID results will determine whether the schools need to transition to a remote learning model.

We believe that the children are connected to teachers, interventionists, service providers, coaches, and mentors. As the school opens in the fall, the plan is to phase in all aspects of school life in the safest and most appropriate manner. It may be necessary to continue with our suite of mitigating strategies to protect students and staff.





We value the contributions and suggestions of parents, caregivers, families, and students in the decision-making process. The VES faculty will continue to play an active role in building trust and credibility for the plans that are to be implemented. Parents and community members are invited to give regular feedback and suggestions concerning the plans to reopen and phase in all aspects of school life.



VES Priorities

Our school system, as guided by the REOPEN Committee has identified priority areas that must be in place to reopen, which include:

- (1) the safety of the students and staff;
- (2) the development of appropriate educational opportunities;
- (3) the awareness of social and emotional well-being of students, families, and staff;
- (4) the expectation that all children will achieve at the expected grade levels by June 2022.

	Safety of Students and Staff Our school will be prepared to reinforce healthy practices among our staff and students, take preventative actions to prevent the spread of all respiratory illnesses, and prepare for any potential cases or increased transmission of COVID-19.
	Development of Appropriate Educational Opportunities Our school will reopen with a full in-person learning model. As new information relating to COVID transmission becomes available we will be flexible to ensure the health and safety of our students and staff.
	Awareness of Social and Emotional Well-Being Our school will reopen knowing that the COVID-19 pandemic has created different types of traumatic experiences and high levels of stress for many of our staff, students, and families. The pandemic has shown the importance of social/emotional well-being for all. In addition, there is a growing body of research proving that social/emotional learning (SEL) is fundamental to academic success.
	Achievement at Expected Grade Level Our school will consider and solidify a systematic cycle of assessments, including initial screenings and formative and summative assessments in order to inform instruction and gauge student learning. We will work to analyze individual student data to identify shifts and changes in instruction to meet students' needs and implement intervention strategies.

In addition to our own priorities, our school system is expected to follow the guidelines of the State Department of Education. Such publications are posted on www.ct.gov/sde. These guidelines are subject to change.

The SDE has provided each district with a template to support its Safe Return to In-Person Learning.

There are five areas that school districts must consider when developing the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan:

I. Health and Safety Strategies

II. Continuity of Services

III. Public Comment

IV. Periodic Review Process

V. Understandable and Uniform Format

Overview:

I. Health and Safety Strategies

Below are descriptions of our school districts approach to provide a suite of mitigation strategies to keep students and staff safe.

- **Universal and correct wearing of masks:** We will follow all State Department of Education mandated policies regarding mask wearing. If mask wearing becomes a local decision the Board of Education will discuss and take action on the matter prior to the start of school. While school is in session and effective until July 20, all staff, students and visitors will wear masks while inside school buildings until otherwise directed by the CDC, CT-DPH or CSDE or by Executive Order.
- **Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding):** The district will comply with CDC guidelines.
- **Hand washing and respiratory etiquette:** Hand washing procedures will be displayed in all public and student restrooms and will be continued as a standard protocol throughout the day. Signs for proper respiratory etiquette will be displayed in classrooms and hallways and reviewed with staff and students on a regular basis.
- **Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation:** The district will continue its current cleaning protocols. Bathrooms and high touch surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected regularly.
- **Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments:** The district will continue to utilize contact tracing protocols developed during the 2020-21 school year and will continue to collaborate with the UNCAS Health District on community contact tracing. The district will follow current CDC and CT-DPH guidelines on isolation and quarantining.
- **Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible:** The district will continue to partner with the UNCAS Health District and other health providers to provide vaccination clinics to staff and students as needed. The district will continue to share vaccination literature with the Voluntown community.

• **Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies:** The district will continue to accommodate students with special health care needs or disabilities whose learning (direct instruction) or other needs (e.g. assisting with toileting, feeding, or ambulation) may require closer proximity and/or direct contact or other accommodations.

II. Continuity of Services

The district will utilize existing staff and additional staff hired through the ESSER II and ARPA/ESSERIII grants to ensure continuity of services to address the academic, social, emotional, mental and physical needs of students. The district will have full in-person learning in place. A remote learning option is not available in the 2021-2022 school year. The district will utilize local and grant funding to provide interventions for students.

III. Public Comment

Public comment is a key element of stakeholder engagement. The public can provide feedback through the following Google Survey that will be open until July 8, 2021.

IV. Periodic Review Process

We are required to periodically review and, as appropriate, revise their Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan at least every six months through September 30, 2023. Each review must include seeking public comment on the plan and developing the plan after taking into account the public comment.

Below are the dates that we must submit a refreshed or updated plan to CSDE via eGMS.

Review/revisit Dates:

- June 22, 2021
- December 22, 2021
- June 22, 2022
- December 22, 2022
- June 22, 2023

V. 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. Our Voluntown Public School system has utilized the Connecticut State Department of Education's template to ensure that the information is in a uniform format. We will provide a, upon request, copy of this document in requested languages or in an oral format as requested or any other format to ensure accessibility.

REOPEN Committee members who have participated and will continue to meet to guide the overall process of meeting the challenges of COVID-19 successfully.

<p>Educational Programming</p> <p>Amy Suffoletto Principal/Compliance Liaison</p> <p>Dr. Lloyd Johnson Director of Student Services</p>	<p>Health & Wellness</p> <p>Linda Hanson School Nurse</p> <p>Patrick McCormack Uncas Health Director</p>	<p>Facilities & Operations</p> <p>Brian Kallio Director of Maintenance</p> <p>Tom O'Connor Director of Food Service</p>
<p>Technology</p> <p>Jim Ward Technology Consultant</p>	<p>Transportation</p> <p>Anne Michaud Director Of Transportation</p>	<p>Social Emotional Well-Being</p> <p>Rachel Sahoo School Counselor</p>
<p>Adam S. Burrows Superintendent of Schools</p> <p>Rachel Ricard Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Parent</p>	<p>Andrea Kelly Voluntown Education Association</p> <p>Toula Wyland Preschool Teacher</p> <p>Angela Gardella Connecticut State Employees Association</p>	<p>Kate Beauparlant BOE Chairperson/Parent</p> <p>Tracey Hanson First Selectman/Parent</p> <p>Amanda Page Parent</p>

Please note that all plans and items included in this document are subject to change based on requirements and/or advice from the U.S. Department of Education, Governor or Connecticut, the Connecticut State Department of Education, and the Uncas Health District.

For additional information and/or questions:

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