



Reopening Stillmeadow Elementary School

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Below are answers to questions that Stillmeadow families may have as they prepare to return for the 2020-21 school year.

This FAQ is organized by topic as follows:

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In addition, Stamford Public Schools has compiled a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) that apply more broadly to the entire District. You may access the District FAQ here:

<https://www.stamfordpublicschools.org/district/covid-19-school-reopening-information/pages/frequently-asked-questions>

Learning Models: Hybrid Learning and Distance Learning

Q. What is the difference between the Hybrid Learning Model and the Distance Teaching and Learning Academy (DTLA) Model?

Please refer to the following document for a side-by-side comparison:

https://www.stamfordpublicschools.org/sites/g/files/vyhliif3841/f/uploads/side_by_side_model_comparisonenglishspanishhaitian.pdf

Q. Is there a difference in curriculum between Hybrid and Distance Models?

Curriculum is the same across both models. The Distance Teaching and Learning Academy (DTLA) Model is a temporary option being offered to parents who do not feel comfortable having their students return to school at this time. Students participating in the DTLA will move through the same prioritized standards as students in the Hybrid Model.

Teachers across both models will continue to collaborate to ensure that benchmarks are met and that the grade-level curriculum is completed by the end of the school year.

Q. Why did Stamford choose an every-other-day model for Hybrid Learning rather than assigning students to attend school in-person on the same days each week?

The three Teaching and Learning sub-committees of the Core Task Force vetted many hybrid schedules and recommended this model, which was then brought forward to the Board of Education (BOE) for approval.

Attending school every other day was the best way to ensure that students in the Hybrid Model have consistent access to in-person learning and that all students receive a balanced number of in-school learning days regardless of group (blue/green) assignment. Given the complexity of the school calendar (holidays, breaks, early dismissal days, etc.), an every-other-day schedule was the best way to ensure all students had consistent access to in-school learning.

Q. What is a cohort?

A cohort is a group of students and educators that stay together throughout the school day. Creating cohorts limits the number of individuals exposed to COVID-19 should a student or staff member test positive.

Q. How many people will be in my child's classroom cohort?

Your child's cohort consists of the classroom teacher, the students assigned to that classroom, and any specialists assigned to work with children in that class.

Each Hybrid Model cohort will have no more than 13 students.

Q. Can my child switch from the Hybrid Learning Model to the Distance Teaching and Learning Academy Model and vice versa? What is the process for submitting a change request?

During the first two weeks of the new school year, Stillmeadow families who opted for either Hybrid or Distance learning may switch to the other model by contacting Principal Asaro via email (aasaro@stamfordct.gov).

After September 18, it is recommended that families not switch models until the end of the marking period to minimize disruption to the child's learning.

To switch models, families must complete a request to Transition Educational Models form that will be available on the Stamford Public Schools website.

Q. If my child switches from the full-time Distance Learning Model to the Hybrid Model, will he/she/they be up to date with what is being taught in the hybrid classroom?

Our expectation is that all teachers will be moving through curriculum at the same pace, so a child who moves from the Distance Model to the Hybrid Model or vice versa will not be ahead or behind in the curriculum.

Q. Who oversees the Distance Teaching & Learning Academy (DTLA) Model?

Building principals manage the DTLA.

Q. How will classes be assigned in the Distance Teaching & Learning Academy (DTLA) Model?

Elementary schools are being paired up to manage class sizes in the DTLA Model. Each DTLA classroom will be capped at 25 students.

Stillmeadow is paired with Roxbury. In most cases, Stillmeadow students who opt for Distance Learning will be taught by a teacher from Stillmeadow. However, if more than 25 students from a grade level opt for Distance Learning, some students may be assigned to a teacher from Roxbury and vice versa.

Q. When will Distance Learning families receive teacher assignments and instructions about when/how to access their classroom on September 8?

Teacher assignments for the DTLA Model will be shared on or before Thursday, September 3. The classroom teacher will contact families with information about how to access learning on the first day of school.

Q. How will teachers in the Distance Learning Model be able to assess reading levels? Will teachers have access to the most recent assessments (from late 2019)?

Teachers will be able to individually assess students in the Distance Learning Model. Teachers will have access to last recorded assessment data.

Q. Are there any projections as to when Stamford Public Schools will return to full-time, in-school learning?

Currently, we expect the Hybrid and Distance Models to operate through at least January 2021.

Hybrid Learning Model at Stillmeadow

In-School Learning Days

Q. What are the school hours for in-school learning days?

Stillmeadow will follow its standard school day schedule as follows:

- **Regular Day:** 8:10 am to 2:30 pm
- **Delayed Opening:** 10:10 am to 2:30 pm
- **Early Dismissal:** 8:10 am to 12:30 pm

Q. What happens if a student comes to school on the wrong day?

The transportation department has arranged for shuttle buses to pick up students from school who come to school on the wrong day.

Q. How much will students move around the building during the day?

Students will spend their day in their classroom. Students will only leave the classroom to use the restroom and for outdoor recess.

Q. Can you provide a sample in-school schedule for each grade level?

The in-school schedule for each grade level is posted on the Stillmeadow website. Follow this link to view the schedule:

https://www.stamfordpublicschools.org/sites/g/files/vyhlif3841/f/pages/master_schedule2020-2021.pdf

Q. Will all in-school work take place on a device?

In-school instruction will follow a blended model that utilizes technology as well as individual notebooks, journals, and workbooks.

At the beginning of the year, time will be spent in-school to help students gain proficiency with their devices so they can be used at home on virtual learning days.

Distance Learning Days

Q. My child is assigned to Green Group. What will he/she/they be doing on September 8?

Students in the Green Group will begin school on their first in-school day, which is Wednesday, September 9.

Q. Will there be any live lessons on at-home learning days?

Both the Hybrid and Distance Models are designed to provide students with live instruction 50 percent of the time.

Students in the Hybrid model will receive live instruction during their assigned in-school days. On at-home days, students may be able to listen to morning announcements, the classroom morning meeting, and read-aloud sessions. Students will work independently during the at-home day.

Students in the Distance Model will receive live instruction daily during either the morning or the afternoon.

Q. How many hours of work will be assigned to students in each grade level on distance learning days?

Workload for at-home days will vary by grade level. Your child's classroom teacher will provide more information when school begins.

Q. What if parents/guardians have questions about work on distance learning days? Will a teacher be available to answer questions?

Parents/guardians may email teachers with any questions. Staff will be required to answer emails as soon as possible, but within 24 hours.

Arrival, Dismissal and Transportation

Car Riders

Q. What is the arrival procedure?

Car riders will exit vehicles and enter the school building through the gym. Students who arrive at school between 7:30 and 7:55 am will be seated six feet apart in the gym until classrooms open. At 7:55 am, students will proceed to their classrooms. Staff will be posted outside, in the gym and in the hallways to direct students and ensure proper social distancing.

Q. What is the car rider dismissal procedure this year?

Students will be seated by classroom cohort in the gym following all social distancing guidelines. Once called, students will walk from the gym to their vehicle. Staff members will be posted in hallways, in the gym, and outside to direct students and ensure proper social distancing.

Q. Will someone be able to help my child get out of / into the car?

Staff will be assigned to assist with drop off and pick up. Assigned staff will wear masks and gloves and will ask permission before helping children exit or enter their vehicle.

Q. Can I get out of my car to assist my child?

For safety and efficiency, parents/guardians must remain in their cars during drop off and pickup.

Q. Can I park and walk my child to the gym entrance?

Parents and guardians must use the rolling car line for drop off and pickup. Parents/guardians should remain in their vehicle and allow assigned staff to assist the students.

Q. Will families be expected to provide identification at car rider pickup?

Children will not be released to an individual that they do not recognize. Families will be provided with windshield placards that should be displayed during pickup. Parents also should provide us with the names and contact information for those authorized to pick up their children.

Bus Transportation

Q. What is the bus rider dismissal procedure this year?

Students will remain in their classrooms until their bus number is called. Staff members will be posted in hallways and outside to direct students to their buses and to ensure proper social distancing.

Q. How will social distancing be maintained when students are entering/exiting buses?

Staff will be stationed throughout the building to assist with arrival and dismissal to ensure students maintain proper social distancing.

Q. Where can I get my child's bus information (bus number and bus stop location?)

Parents should get their child's bus information through the PowerSchool Parent Portal. If you do not have a PowerSchool Parent Portal account, you should create one at

<https://sis.stamfordpublicschools.org/public/home.html>.

Bus information will not be printed in the Stamford Advocate or mailed home to families this year.

Q. How will social distancing be maintained on buses? Will there be bus monitors?

Per the District, bus monitors will be assigned to some elementary buses for the first few weeks of school.

Q. What are student requirements for riding the bus?

All students are required to wear a mask to enter and ride the school bus. If a child forgets his/her/their mask, the driver will provide one.

Students will load the bus from back to front (i.e. the first students to board will sit in the back) and unload from front to back (students in front rows exit first). The only exception is for Kindergarteners, who will sit in the first two rows regardless of when they board the bus.

Q. Will bus transportation still be provided to after-school programs?

Students attending designated afterschool programs (Boys & Girls Club, for example) may ride the bus to their respective programs at the start of the school year.

Bus monitors will be assigned to some elementary buses for the first few weeks of school.

Q. What safety requirements will bus drivers follow?

Drivers are required to wear a mask when students are on the bus.

Q. Will buses be cleaned every day?

Buses will be deep cleaned with EPA approved chemicals following CDC guidelines at the end of each day. High-touch areas of the bus will be cleaned using EPA approved chemicals by the driver between routes.

Classrooms

Q: What furniture will be in each classroom?

Each classroom will include:

- Individual student work areas (desks or tables)
- Teacher desk/workstation
- Table for small group instruction.

Most other furniture is being removed from classrooms.

Q: Will each student have their own desk? Or will desks be shared by students on Blue and Green Days?

Students will be assigned a desk for their in-school learning day, but that same desk will be assigned to a different student on the alternate day. Desks and chairs will be wiped down each night.

Q. What will classrooms look like this year?

Classroom photos will be shared in the whole school orientation video that will be posted on the Stillmeadow website.

Q: If desks are shared, where will student supplies be stored on virtual learning days?

Materials will be stored in individually assigned book boxes or storage containers in the classroom. Other materials may go back and forth between home and school to be used on virtual learning days.

Q. Will student desks have plexiglass shields?

Desks are socially distanced and may at times have extra protection with trifold dividers for each desk, however this level of protection is not required.

Plexiglass shields will be placed on the teacher table used for small group instruction.

Lunch, Snacks and Recess

Q. Where will students eat lunch?

Students will eat lunch in their classrooms.

Q. My child usually gets lunch from the school cafeteria. How will he/she/they get lunch?

Lunches will be delivered to the classrooms.

Q. Will students be able to have snack?

Based on guidance from the District's health professionals, students will not have snack in school this year to minimize the amount of time when masks are removed.

Students will have access to "grab and go" breakfasts and lunches at school. Families may send lunch to school with their child if they prefer.

Q. Who will supervise the classroom while children eat lunch?

A staff faculty member will supervise all classrooms.

Q. How will food allergies be handled in the classroom?

Students will eat at their desks, which will be socially distanced at six feet apart. In most cases, this will be adequate for students with food allergies.

If your child has an airborne allergy, please contact either Monretha Sinclair (Nurse - General Education) or Moira Bryson (Nurse - Special Education).

Q. How will recess be structured?

Each grade level will be assigned a recess time, and each classroom cohort will have a designated play area on school grounds.

Students will be required to stay within their classroom cohort and may not mix with students from other classrooms.

At this time, students will not be permitted to use the playground playscapes, swings, or other equipment. We are coming up with ideas for activities that will ensure students get physical exercise while maintaining social distancing.

Technology

Q. What technology platform is Stillmeadow using for distance learning?

Google Suite – Enterprise Version.

Q. Why is the district asking students to use their personal computer devices at school on in-school learning days?

Students may opt to use their personal devices, but this is not required. Students who do not have personal devices or choose not to use personal devices will be issued the appropriate technology for their grade level.

Q. Will students be expected to bring devices to/from school every day?

Students in Grades 4–5 will be expected to transport devices to/from school on a regular basis.

Students in Grades K–3 will take devices home periodically as directed by the classroom teacher.

Devices will be sent home with all students should the District announce a transition to full-time remote learning.

Q. For students who need school-issued Chromebooks, when will they receive them? Can Green Group students pick up Chromebooks before September 8?

Device distribution is being managed by the City of Stamford IT Department in coordination with each school's Technology Integration Support Specialist (TISS).

All students will complete a series of digital citizenship lessons before taking devices home.

Green group students will not be assigned any work before their first in-school day on Wednesday, September 9.

Q. Who do I contact if my child has trouble logging in on distance learning days?

Parents should email their child's classroom teacher and always copy Jodi Nathanson (jnathanson@stamfordct.gov), Stillmeadow's Technology Integration Support Specialist.

Student Support Services (Special Ed, ESL, etc.)

Q. How will students receive support services (special education, ESL, related services)?

Cohorts have been designed to limit interaction even during extra services on in-school learning days.

Distance learning students will receive their services virtually.

Q. What is the process for IEP, SRBI, and 504 meetings?

Meetings will be conducted via video conferencing and phone calls. Assistant Principal Mackey will contact you to schedule meetings.

Q. What resources will be available if students experience social-emotional difficulties adjusting to this new normal?

Our teachers are trained to support and respond to the social emotional needs of their students.

Our school utilizes strategies and curriculum from the [Yale RULER Program](#) for Social Emotional Learning. The RULER program is fully integrated into our school culture.

In addition, Stillmeadow's team of social workers and psychologists will be available to any child who is struggling to adapt to school.

Specials (Art, Music, Physical Education, Media)

Q. What is the plan for art, music, and physical education?

Students will continue to receive art, music, and physical education instruction. To minimize social contacts, each classroom cohort will participate in one special during each marking period.

For instance, a classroom cohort assigned art in the first marking period will have art class during every in-school learning day from September 8 through the end of the first marking period.

Q. Will students be able to borrow books from the media center?

Due to restrictions on shared items, students will not be able to borrow books from the media center.

Supplies

Q. Will students share supplies?

As a safety precaution, students will be prohibited from sharing supplies.

Q. How/where will student supplies be stored on distance learning days?

Most student materials will be kept in their backpacks or individual book boxes.

Q. Where/when can we drop off supplies?

Families may drop off their child's school supplies before September 8. Please place the supplies in bags or boxes labeled with your child's first and last name and grade. Use the intercom at the main entrance to contact the office and a staff member will come to the door to take the supplies.

Students may also bring supplies on the first day of school, as staff will be available to assist students who need help.

Q. What supplies will my child need on at-home learning days?

Your child's teacher will inform you if any special supplies are needed for at-home learning days.

Visitors, Events and After-School Activities

Q. Will visitors be allowed in the building?

At this time, only staff members and students will be allowed in the building.

If a parent needs to pick up a child early (due to illness, etc.), the parent will be asked to wait outside the main entrance (near the flagpole). If a student is ill, the nurse (or the nurse's designee) will walk the child to the exit.

Parents who need to drop off items will be provided access to the lobby outside the main office to leave those items. Please be sure to label items with your child's name, teacher, and grade.

Q. Will there be any after-school enrichment opportunities at Stillmeadow this fall?

Due to the restriction on visitors and the need to thoroughly clean classrooms and bathrooms each night, Stillmeadow will not offer after-school enrichment classes until further notice.

ROSCCO will continue to provide on-site before-school and after-school childcare to enrolled families.

Substitute Teachers

Q. Will substitute teachers be utilized when a classroom teacher is absent or unavailable?

The District is assigning a group of substitute teachers to Stillmeadow who will be available to fill in for classroom teachers. Substitutes will no longer be able to work in more than one building. The District also is identifying certified teachers to serve as long-term substitutes should a staff member require an extended leave.

Health and Safety

Mask Wearing

Q. Will students be required to wear masks?

Yes. In keeping with state requirements, all Stamford Public Schools (SPS) students and staff must wear a protective face covering or face mask that completely covers the nose and mouth.

Q. What if my child forgets to bring a mask to school?

If a student arrives at school without a mask, a disposable mask will be provided.

Q. How and when will mask breaks occur?

Teachers will schedule mask breaks throughout the day. Mask breaks may take place outside, in hallways, or in classrooms. Strict social distancing requirements will be maintained during mask breaks.

Q. If a student refuses to wear a mask, will he/she/they be removed from the classroom?

In keeping with State reopening requirements, all students and staff are expected to wear a protective face covering or face mask that completely covers the nose and mouth.

The District is working with the Board of Education to pass a mask policy, which will be added to [the Stamford Public Schools Policy Guide for Families](#).

We do not want to be punitive, so our first step will be to work with students and families to understand the importance of adherence. If a student continues to refuse to wear a mask, an administrator will step in and move the student to a safe location. If the student still refuses to comply, parents will be contacted and there will be consequences, up to and including suspensions. The priority is keeping everyone safe.

Q. My child is unable to wear a mask at school due to a pre-existing medical condition. What should I do?

If your child is unable to wear a mask at school, due to a pre-existing medical condition, please reach out to your building administrator (aasaro@stamfordct.gov) and school nurse.

Please note, a written notification from a physician is required for the District to permit a medical exemption. More information is available on page 17 of the [SPS Reopening Plan](#).

Personal Protective Equipment and Supplies

Q. What types of PPE (personal protective equipment) will be provided to students and staff?

Classrooms will have hand sanitizing stations. Staff will receive face shields, masks, and plexiglass shields. Protective clothing will be provided to teachers as needed.

Q. Will students be able to keep hand sanitizer at their desks?

Hand sanitizer will be available in every classroom and high-traffic areas in the building. If students bring their own hand sanitizer to school, it may be stored in their backpack.

COVID-19 Screening and Diagnosis

Q. Will students and staff have their temperatures taken upon entering the building each morning?

No. Mass temperature screenings at school are not planned, as the CDC considers that to be less effective than individual screening done at home. Stamford Public Schools will provide guidelines for individual at-home screening.

Q. If a child or teacher tests positive for COVID-19 will the entire school move to a Distance Teaching and Learning Model?

If a child or teacher tests positive for COVID-19, the classroom cohort of the diagnosed individual will transition to Distance Teaching and Learning for 14 days. The Stamford Department of Health will review each case to determine if additional measures are necessary.

The district is creating a clear process of testing requirements and notifications for staff, students, and families. [Here is a step-by-step process](#) of what will happen if someone in your child's cohort tests positive.

- Should your child, or someone in the immediate family test positive, please notify your principal and school nurse as soon as possible. The school nurse will guide the family through a risk-assessment and implement the contact tracing process. Once the contract tracing is done, we will provide information to those affected families, without disclosing any HIPA documentation.
- If a student tests positive, we may ask that class to self-quarantine for 14 days. If the teacher is not symptomatic, we will continue with distance learning throughout the time. If the teacher is unable to teach, a substitute will be assigned for instruction to continue.

Our health department is creating a video to provide further details. We will provide extensive training for staff, students, and families to ensure that we handle this in an effective and efficient way.

Q. If a sibling tests positive, will the other child from the family's class be sent home as well?

Situations will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, using contact tracing.

Q. What if a student or staff member develops symptoms or becomes sick while inside the school building?

In keeping with state and district requirements, Stillmeadow will have an isolation room for individuals experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. To minimize exposure to others, parents will be expected to pick up their child within 30 minutes of notification that the child is ill.

Remember it is important to keep your contact and emergency contact numbers up to date to ensure you are notified immediately if your child is sick.

Q. Are students required to get a COVID-19 test before school starts?

Students and staff are not required to get a COVID-19 test before returning to school.

Anyone experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or who has been in contact with someone who tested positive should consult with their physician to determine if testing is recommended.

Non-COVID Illness

Q. In previous years, students experiencing cold-like symptoms without fever were permitted to attend school. Is that policy going to be different this year since many COVID-19 symptoms overlap with the common cold?

To ensure the health and safety of students and staff, the District has created a [Daily Family and Staff Checklist](#) to determine whether students or staff should report to school. All families and staff members are asked to review this checklist before leaving home each day.

Q. Is the District requiring students and staff to get flu shots?

Flu shots are not required at this time, except for Pre-K students.

Q. If my child is home sick with a cold on their assigned in-school day, can he/she/they join their Hybrid Classroom from home via Google Classroom?

A sick day will still be a sick day. A child who is sick at home is expected to rest and recover.

Bathroom Breaks

Q. How will bathroom breaks be managed? Will students from different classroom cohorts be in the bathroom at the same time?

Kindergarten students will be escorted to/from hallway restrooms by the classroom instructional assistant. If the Kindergarten classroom has an in-room bathroom, staff will ensure students thoroughly wash their hands before returning to their desks.

Students in Grades 1–5 will be permitted to use the hallway restrooms independently as needed, as this process generally takes far less than the 15-minute threshold set by health officials as a “contact” for COVID-19 exposure.

Travel Quarantine

Q. My family just returned from an out-of-state vacation. Can I send my child to school?

Governor Lamont issued a [Travel Advisory Executive Order](#) that requires anyone returning to Connecticut from states or regions with high infection and positivity rates for COVID-19 to self-quarantine for a 14-day period upon their return.

Please [click here](#) for an updated list of states or regions that require a 14-day quarantine upon return to Connecticut.

All staff, students, and families are expected to follow the self-quarantine requirements.

Cleaning and Building Maintenance

- Q. Who will clean student work areas each day? Will students be expected to clean/disinfect their desks at the end of the day?**

Custodians will clean each evening.

- Q. What areas of the school will be cleaned daily?**

Custodians will disinfect high-touch areas each night. Bathrooms will be cleaned twice per day.

- Q. How often will classes be sanitized throughout the day, and who will do it?**

Custodians will wipe clean high touch areas throughout the day. Teachers will have wipes that may be used for hand sanitizing and cleaning.

- Q. Can students bring their own wipes to clean their desk in the morning and after lunch?**

This is unnecessary. Classrooms will be cleaned each night and supplies will be available in the classroom to clean up after lunch.

- Q. Is the ventilation system at Stillmeadow adequate? Have Merv 13 or higher air filters been installed? Will more external air be brought into the school? Has the air quality been tested?**

The District's facilities department has evaluated every school building to ensure they meet ventilation and airflow requirements.

Filters will be changed to meet standards, and airflow is programmed to meet requirements.

Transitioning to School- or District-Wide Distance Learning

- Q. What level of infection – either in the community or at Stillmeadow – will trigger a transition to Full-Time Distance Learning? What percentage of infection will cause a shutdown??**

The District will review a variety of factors daily to determine if/when it may be necessary to transition to full-time distance teaching and learning, either district-wide or at any one school.

In addition to information received by the Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), each principal will be completing a Daily Risk Assessment for their building that will help inform decision-making.

The Connecticut Department of Public Health and the State Department of Education have multiple indicators which are monitored to determine the risk level. Some examples of indicators are the number of new cases of COVID-19, the percentage positivity rate, and the number of COVID-19 hospitalizations. A recent example is Danbury being put on alert for an increase in the number of positive cases.

- Q. Are teachers being trained on techniques for effective distance teaching?**

Teachers will receive ongoing technology training facilitated by Jodi Nathanson – Stillmeadow's Technology Integration Support Specialist (TISS) – and the District's teaching and learning professionals.