

# **Ashford School District 2020-2021 Access/Reopening Plan**

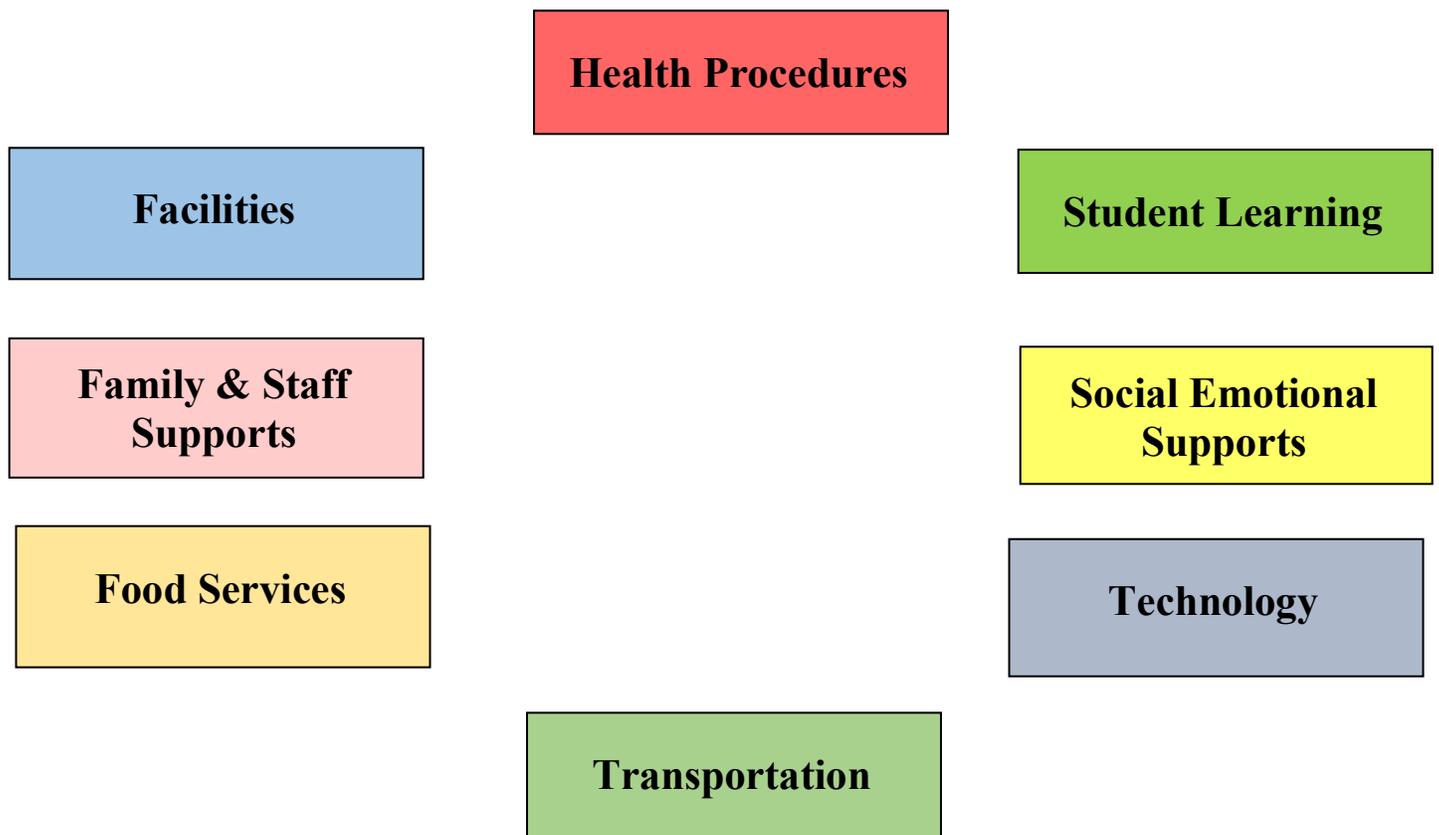
## **District Guidelines and Planning Document**

### Reopening Committee

Dr. James P. Longo, Superintendent  
Troy Hopkins, Principal/Assistant Superintendent  
Cindy Ford, Director of Pupil Personnel Services  
Polly Borysevicz, Assistant Principal  
Joan Celotti, Transportation Coordinator  
Mike Mellady, Facilities Coordinator  
Martha Sibley-Jett, School Nurse  
Scott Waddell, Technology Coordinator  
Karen Samperi, Food Service Manager  
Donna Molnar, Technology Assistant  
Jen Lindsay, AEA Co-President  
Chris Busse, AEA Co-President  
Amy Capozziello, AEA Negotiations Chairperson  
Karen Munroe, Interim Business Manager

**Fall 2020**  
**Dated August 3, 2020**

The Ashford School District's Reopening Committee consisted of 14 individuals representing administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, transportation, custodians, food service, and business office staff. The committee met several times throughout the summer to articulate questions for consideration, review state guidance, and provide perspective to the development of the local district plan for reopening. The committee was facilitated by the Superintendent of Schools.



**Ashford School District**  
**Reopening Plan**  
Fall 2020

**Reopening Plan Point of Contact: Dr. James P. Longo, Superintendent**

**Contact Email: [jplongo@ashfordct.org](mailto:jplongo@ashfordct.org)**

**Contact Phone: Office: 860-429-1927, Cell: 203-530-3156**

**Ashford COVID-19 Health and Safety Liaison: Martha Sibley-Jett, School Nurse, trained contact tracer for EHHD**

**Liaison Email: [msibleyjett@ashfordct.org](mailto:msibleyjett@ashfordct.org)**

### **Superintendent's Message to Our Community**

The Ashford Reopening Plan for the 2020-2021 school year has been developed in consultation with the Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD) and relevant stakeholders, as well as survey information and several committee meetings. Our plan is grounded in the six guiding principles outlined below by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE):

1. Safeguarding the health and safety of students and staff;
2. Allowing all students the opportunity to return to school full time starting in the fall;
3. Monitoring the school, students, and staff, and when necessary, potentially cancelling classes in the future to appropriately contain COVID-19;
4. Emphasizing equity, access, and support to our students and community that are emerging from this historic disruption;
5. Fostering strong two-way communication with our partners including families, educators, and staff; and,
6. Factoring into reopening decisions the challenges to the physical safety, social-emotional wellbeing, and the mental health needs of our students when they are not in school.

### **Introduction**

The FULL REOPENING MODEL is the mode of instructional delivery now recommended by the State of Connecticut. This could change if conditions in the state require. This plan must remain flexible and responsive to state mandates. This plan was developed with the best information available as of the date of publication under the authority of Connecticut Governor's executive orders, CSDE policies, practices and guidance, and the policies and leadership of the Ashford Board of Education.

The Ashford Reopening Plan is structured to begin the academic year inviting all students to return to our school for full-time instruction beginning September 3, 2020. This full, in-person opening can be implemented so long as public health data and the CSDE continue to support this model. This model is supported with intensive mitigation strategies and health monitoring, containment, and class cancellation plans.

Because the pandemic is so unpredictable, it is expected that some parents will not be comfortable sending their children back to school. Therefore, our plan is flexible and presents families with an opt-out option, allowing students to receive distance learning regardless of what other students have chosen. While we have chosen to begin the 2020-2021 academic year with a full, in-person return to school, in addition to our full-time in-person instruction plan, we are prepared to modify our plan to support a partial reopening or a distance learning approach, or to allow for scaling back at a future date if public health data changes.

This is a living document that will be subject to continual revision as we identify gaps, and work to develop an action plan for instructional operations that specifically addresses inclusion, equity, and access for all learners, with strategies and clearly defined action steps.

Contained within this plan are three distinctly different possibilities for the delivery of instruction to Ashford students. The plan chosen at any time will be based upon the data and the status of the pandemic in our region. Here are brief descriptions of the three plans available to Ashford and required by the CSDE.

- In-Person, back-to-school classes with an opt-out option for families who choose distance learning as opposed to attending classes in the schoolhouse.
- A hybrid plan that has approximately half of the students in class on two days with distance instruction three days a week, while the other half receive streamed instruction through distance learning and come to school on two different days, thus having only half of the students in the building on any given day. Once again, the opt-out option remains in place.
- All students receive distance learning instruction with no students in the schoolhouse. Distance learning is a plan that all instruction is delivered electronically while students are at home. They are still enrolled in school as full-time students, and receive grades for their work.

More detail for each of these operational options will be provided throughout this document.

### **Temporarily Choosing Not to Participate**

Our reopening plan, full in-school in-person option, is designed to accommodate the needs of our Ashford families while adhering to the guidance provided by the state. Therefore, an opt-out option is included that allows parents and/or guardians to temporarily choose not to send their children to school, and therefore not to participate in the in-person, back-to-the-classroom, reopening option available to them, but rather, choose the opt-out distance learning option. In that case, it would be their responsibility to notify the school administration of their plans to participate in our distance learning option. The parent may change this decision if circumstances change for them and they wish to send their children to school. Any change must be formally noticed to the school administration at least one week prior to re-entry or the beginning of a trimester to allow for class placement.

### **School Liaison Data Collection**

Ashford has designated our school nurse to serve as our COVID-19 Health and Safety Compliance Liaison. She will be responsible for engaging with students, parents, faculty, staff, and administrators, to answer questions or concerns about health and safety requirements regarding COVID-19. She is uniquely qualified for this responsibility as she is not only trained and educated for the role of school nurse, but is also a trained contact tracer for the current pandemic.

## **Communications Plans**

We have developed several ways to communicate with our community, families, and staff. We have already begun to implement systems to communicate our most up-to-date policies and protocols. We use the following methods to communicate with staff, students, and families (all utilized simultaneously):

- K-12 Alert System - which utilizes both email and telephone text announcements to anyone who signs up to receive the service. It currently covers nearly 90% of our school community.
- Post announcements and news on the homepage of our website.
- Post a link to our reopening plan, policies and practices on our homepage.
- Utilize the traditional written flier to be sent home with students in their backpack.
- Publicize easy access to our school and district office for questions and answers.
- The following email address has been established for anyone to send in questions, concerns, or suggestions and receive a response: [myopinion@ashfordct.org](mailto:myopinion@ashfordct.org)
- Every student's family will receive a letter in mid-August advising them of the reopening plans for that student's grade and classroom. Such plans will be publicly presented at open administrative scheduled parent meetings and Board of Education meetings.
- Families who do not have internet access will be reached directly through telephone or USPS mail.

Ashford will communicate our plan, policies and procedures in a manner accessible to those with language, visual and/or hearing impairments. We have an active community liaison officer in our building who will advise us if such a situation arises in our school.

We have a "Reopening Committee" made up of a cross section of community members, staff, and faculty, who have been engaged in dialogue to develop our plan for reopening school and for ongoing two-way communication with the school community about new policies and/or protocols *prior* to reopening.

We have developed a system of communication (described previously) that has effectively communicated on a weekly basis and ensures detailed updates are provided any time critical information regarding policies, protocols, or health data changes.

We will make our plan easily accessible, on our website homepage, board of education minutes, and with copies available by request and on the counter of the school main office.

Our plan has been developed in part utilizing multiple surveys of families regarding their preferences regarding school attendance and the use of school provided transportation. Our surveys aligned with the CSDE District Reopen Survey.

## **REOPENING OPERATIONS PLAN**

### **Facilities**

When determining the classroom layout, student workstations in every classroom will be rearranged to maximize social distancing, achieving six (6) feet when feasible.

During our assessment of the school facility, it was determined that other spaces did not need to be repurposed for instruction in the school, and that ample space was available for appropriate social distancing for all students. Furthermore, due to the large size of our classrooms and our small class sizes, we were able to

maximize space between the teacher and students diminishing the risk of droplets from teachers during instruction.

All signs and messages related to stopping the spread are accessible for students with disabilities and in languages appropriate for the school population. Additional signage was also added regarding mitigation practices encouraged for our students.

We have had several staff meetings to identify the training needs of staff related to health and safety protocols, and have scheduled professional development to occur prior to the first day of classes. During these professional development days, all teachers and noncertified staff will be trained, as they all have student contact, and roles to fill in the education of our students. These training days will include practice of all new protocols for all staff specific to their roles in the school. This training will include, but not be limited to, a plan for in-person or online training that includes: social distancing, cleaning protocols, and hygiene practices. Attendance will be required, and make-up time scheduled for anyone who cannot attend for approved reasons.

We will also provide training for students that is made available to interested families. We will repeat this training during the first months that school reopens if parents are interested. Students will receive further training and reinforcement of protocols for proper mitigation during school.

Furthermore, we will ensure training is provided to substitutes or others who may enter the school outside of the first day or typical calendar start, as part of our orientation process.

### **Daily Operations – Instructional Models Available in Ashford School District**

The mode of instruction is determined by the superintendent in cooperation with the school administration under the authority of the Ashford Board of Education, the Governor’s executive orders, and/or the actions of the CSDE. All of these decisions will be based upon the timely application of data, and the advice of the medical professionals of the EHHD, and our school medical advisor.

#### **General**

Cohorts will be created within each grade level and will average approximately forty (40) students, with an additional division of sub-cohorts averaging 10-12 students. A *cohort* is a group of students who will spend the bulk of the school day together. The cohort concept is a practical way to divide students into small groups. Sub-cohorts will mix for special services only. The cohorts and sub-cohorts minimize the interaction of any student outside their designated cohort, thereby minimizing exposure to potential infection and making it easier to contact trace.

We have developed consistent policies to address when clubs, before-and after-school programs, or other voluntary groups will be allowed to use school space.

- After school clubs may begin in January providing the data supports it. Clubs will be limited to approximately ten students.
- There will be no before school clubs.
- No outside groups will use the facility in the evening prior to January, and such use will be assessed in January to determine if it may begin at that time.
- Assemblies will be limited to virtual and not be in-person until further notice.
- All mitigation protocols will be followed.
- We will include ways to safely allow access for the YMCA after-school program.
  - They will be limited to specific space for their program (i.e. the cafeteria).

- All school protocols and mitigation practices will be followed.
- All YMCA staff will be required to receive training in student safety and pandemic mitigation.
- Athletics will adhere to State of Connecticut guidelines, rules and protocols set out by the CIAC, and Ashford Board of Education policies.
- Field trips will be discontinued until January when the issue will be revisited.

### **Changing Your Mind**

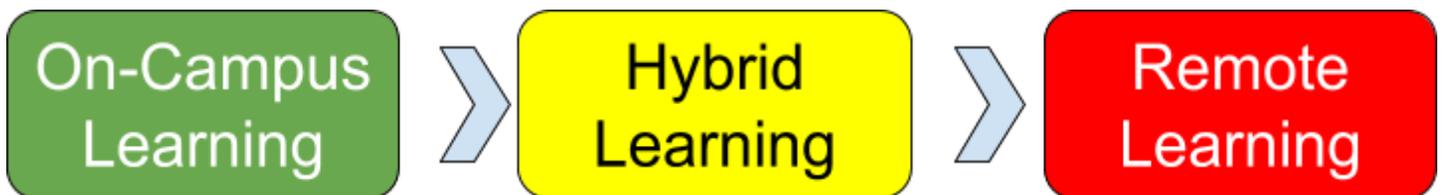
Families may decide to change their mind if the plan they had originally chosen is not working for them by meeting the following criteria:

- Changes may occur by prior notice at the beginning of each trimester.
- A minimum of one week’s notice to the school administration is provided, when a change is urgent.

### **Modifications to School Schedule**

Specials such as art, music, and physical education will be provided using a modified schedule that minimizes the teachers’ contact with large numbers of students, utilizing the cohort design described throughout this plan.

The school schedule will be modified to minimize student movement and adhere to the concept of student cohorts.



### **Option #1 - In-Person Return to the Schoolhouse, On-Campus Learning**

#### General Description

1. All students will be invited back to school.
2. Families will have the option of opting-out and choosing distance learning.
3. Transportation will be offered to all students.
4. Families may elect to transport their own children.
5. Student travel in hallways will be limited, and travel lanes have been created to avoid and/or minimize contact and maintain social distancing.
6. Bathroom facilities will be designated to small numbers of students and disinfected several times a day.
7. Families may change their mind at any time with one week notice to the school administration.
8. The school day will begin for students ten minutes later to allow time for disinfection and cleaning of buses.
9. Teachers and staff will report to work as provided in their contract.
10. Teachers and staff with high-risk medical conditions may petition the superintendent to be allowed to work in a location without students. Their assignment will be determined on an individual basis.
11. Lessons will be delivered in class as is the traditional practice.
12. Students at home will be capable of receiving the same lesson, in real time, through streaming.
13. Students without computer hardware will be loaned equipment, if needed.
14. Students without internet access will be assisted in acquiring it.
15. All work, homework, and grading will be conducted as it has traditionally been in Ashford School District.

16. Students receiving modifications or special education will be addressed through the special education department.
17. This plan is flexible and may be modified if conditions change, or on behalf of the safety of the students and/or staff.
18. Questions regarding this plan should be addressed to the school office in care of the principal at [thopkins@ashfordct.org](mailto:thopkins@ashfordct.org)

## **Option #2 – Hybrid Learning Model**

### General Description

1. The Hybrid model is designed to have half of the students in the schoolhouse at one time, thereby splitting the student enrollment into three sections: Group A, Group B, and the distance learning only group.
2. Families may elect distance learning only.
3. Teachers and staff with high-risk medical conditions may petition the superintendent to be allowed to work in a location without students. Their assignment will be determined on an individual basis.
4. Group A
  - a. Will be approximately half of the students who did not elect distance learning only.
  - b. Attend classes in the schoolhouse on Monday and Tuesday.
  - c. Receive distance learning on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.
5. Group B
  - a. Will be comprised of the remaining half of the students who did not elect distance learning only.
  - b. Attend classes in the schoolhouse on Thursday and Friday.
  - c. Receive distance learning on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.
6. There will be no students in the building on Wednesday.
7. Student travel in hallways will be limited, and travel lanes have been created to avoid and/or minimize contact and maintain social distancing.
8. Bathroom facilities will be designated to small numbers of students and disinfected several times a day.
9. While one group of students are in school, the other group will be receiving the same instruction, but by distance learning. Most likely streaming the instruction directly from the classroom.
10. Students receiving modifications or special education will be addressed through the special education department.
11. This plan is flexible and may be modified if conditions change, or on behalf of the safety of the students and/or staff.
12. Questions regarding this plan should be addressed to the school office in care of the principal - [thopkins@ashfordct.org](mailto:thopkins@ashfordct.org)

## **Option #3 – Full Remote - Distance Learning Model**

### General Description

1. All students will be provided full curriculum instruction as a distance learning lesson.
2. Students will receive that instruction from their regular classroom teachers through a variety of methods as determined by the content of the lesson.
3. All students without access to technology may borrow a computer from the school.
4. Any student without access to the internet will be assisted in getting access by the school.
5. All assignments and assessments will be carried out much as it would be if students were in class in the schoolhouse.
6. Grades and assessments will be issued as usual and traditional based upon grade level.

7. Students receiving modifications or special education will be addressed through the special education department.
8. This plan is flexible and may be modified if conditions change, or on behalf of the safety of the students and/or staff.
9. Questions regarding this plan should be addressed to the school office in care of the principal - [thopkins@ashfordct.org](mailto:thopkins@ashfordct.org)

## **Child Nutrition**

School lunches will be prepared and available with a plan to maintain social distancing. This plan will vary by grade level to accommodate the specific needs of each age group.

As a School that participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack Program, and Special Milk Program (SMP) as applicable, we will continue to determine eligibility for, and make available free and reduced price meals, snacks, and free milk to all eligible students. Furthermore, we will comply with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) regulations and policies for school meals and milk including the meal pattern requirements. As a school that participates in the NSLP, we will claim meals/milk provided to eligible students using accurate counting and claiming methods.

## **Transportation**

### Low Transmission Risk Transportation Plan

We plan to operate at reduced capacity due to the number of families who have indicated that their children will be utilizing the distance learning option, or not use school provided transportation while maximizing health and safety protocols, as well as considerations outlined in this plan.

- Require passengers to wear a face mask or cloth face covering that completely covers the nose and mouth during transit, prior to boarding the bus, and must be kept in place until they are completely off the bus.
- Passengers will load into the bus from the back row to the front (where the first passengers onto the bus sit in the back row), and then unload the bus in a controlled manner upon arrival at the school from front to back by seat.
- Bus passengers should be spaced with family members sitting together and non-family members should be spaced six (6) feet apart utilizing alternating diagonal seating.
- Bus drivers will be fully trained in mitigation protocols and bus monitors provided if it proves necessary.

Families will be surveyed to determine if they choose to provide their own transportation to and from school. That option is available to everyone, however, changes to that decision must be given to the transportation coordinator in a timely manner to ensure that routes for buses are as efficient as possible.

If a parent is unsure of their transportation needs, it is best they keep their children on the bus list until they are sure that they want to self-transport. However, please understand that bus routes are complicated and the decision should be well thought out and as consistent as possible. One week's notice is expected for a family to change their bus transportation decision. This is not a day-to-day or even week-to-week decision.

## **Board Policies and Protocols**

The Board of Education has been provided a full set of policies (from Connecticut's premier educational legal team Shipman & Goodwin) that are focused entirely upon the COVID-19 pandemic and all the required and recommended guidance associated with a safe and thoughtful response. These policies will be posted on the home page of our website.

## **Health Procedures and Protocols**

We plan to ensure that all students are educated and engaged in the new expectations related to all public health policies and protocols. The best approach to communicating the information for each age group will be determined by their classroom teacher in cooperation with the school administration, and be compliant with Board policy. Time will be set aside at the beginning of the school year, as well as frequent reminders as appropriate for the grade level, to review the new policies and protocols.

During the student training process, we will familiarize all students of the standard public health practices used to prevent the spread of diseases. These practices include, but are not limited to:

- Social distancing;
- Frequent hand washing and use of hand sanitizer;
- Use of face coverings that completely cover the nose and mouth;
- Respiratory and cough etiquette;
- Enhanced cleaning/disinfection of surfaces; and,
- Conscientious reporting of illness or any symptoms.

We will provide adequate supplies, including soap, hand sanitizer (with at least 60% ethyl alcohol or 70% isopropyl alcohol) for staff and older students who can safely use hand sanitizer, paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, cloth face coverings (as feasible for anyone who does not have their own), and no-touch/foot-pedal trash cans.

Our school nurse works closely with our M.D. Medical Advisor and the EHHD advisors for guidance and the latest statistics. The EHHD will also handle the contact tracing for our school and other schools in the region.

## **Reporting Illnesses and Identifying Vulnerable Populations**

As part of our health and safety protocols we will:

- Instruct students and staff to inform the school if they are sick with COVID-19 related symptoms, particularly if they had a known contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 and have also had contact with the school population.
- Develop consistent protocols for information reporting, and a point person to appropriately receive and safeguard this information, such as the school nurse, or principal.
- Educate staff and families about when to stay at home. Guidance for staff and families can be found on [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and will be included in our training of staff and students.
- Instruct staff and students (or their parents and guardians) to perform a self-assessment prior to leaving for school to identify fever and other possible COVID-19 symptoms. Communicate this expectation and provide parents with reminders of those symptoms that require them to keep their students at home.
- Establish and communicate school-wide sick protocols, including signs and symptoms of COVID-19, and temperature thresholds requiring students or staff to stay home.

Two active links to cdc.gov if you are reading this plan online:

- When to stay home.
- Symptoms - symptoms consistent with COVID-19

### **Social Distancing**

Our professional development program and facility layout will assist staff and students to maintain maximum social distancing between individuals to reduce the transmission of the virus per the public health guidelines available.

1. Student travel in hallways will be limited, and travel lanes have been created to avoid and/or minimize contact and maintain social distancing.
2. Bathroom facilities will be designated to small numbers of students and disinfected several times a day.

### **Use of Face Coverings, Masks, and Face Shields**

We have adopted protocols requiring the use of face coverings **for all students, staff, and visitors when they are inside the school building, with certain exceptions listed below.**

- For anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance, face coverings and masks should not be required, [per CDC guidance](#).
- For anyone who has a medical reason making it unsafe to wear a face covering, masks should not be required.

We are prepared to provide a mask to any student or staff member who does not have one.

It is important to note that there will be frequent mask-removal breaks for students throughout the day designed to minimize student discomfort with mask wearing. These breaks will be scheduled and carried out in a manner that is safe and practical for the various age groups.

If a student is bringing their own face mask to school, they must adhere to the school's rules regarding appropriate attire in the building.

- No political statements of any kind.
- No frightening or violent images.

### **Planning and Distribution of Information**

Monitoring and reporting symptoms that could be related to COVID-19, with the goal of decreasing the risk of spreading or contracting the virus, and maintaining oversight related to the pandemic, while complying with relevant privacy and health laws are as follows:

- All staff will be trained in the CDC Guidance regarding the symptoms of the COVID-19 Virus.
- This training will include strategies for teaching the symptoms to age appropriate students.
- Training parents through home communication and voluntary day and evening Zoom meetings.
- Suspected cases will be reported to the EHHD liaison for confirmation and contact tracing with permission from the family/parent.
- EHHD will follow their protocols for pursuing, distribution, and follow-up to the information.

## Containment Plan

Ashford has committed to following the guidance provided by the Connecticut Department of Public Health.

- The Connecticut Department of Public Health will be providing a tiered system to assist leaders and define the decision-making approach should partial or full class cancellation become necessary.
- The Ashford written protocols for containment and immediate response if an individual has signs or symptoms of COVID-19, there is a known exposure, or a member of the school community has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, to decrease the risks of spreading COVID-19, shall include the following:
  - Immediate coordination with the Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD) including being ready to comply with requests for information from the EHHD to assist with contact tracing.
  - Ashford Response Team and specific responsibilities are:
    - Martha Sibley-Jett – School Nurse – initial contact for family of suspected/infected
    - Troy Hopkins – School Principal – Contact EHHD
    - Scott Waddell - Technology Administrator – EMT Resource for emergency consultation
  - Consideration of the following signs and symptoms exhibited by students or staff would require medical exams to determine if their immediate dismissal from school is necessary for a period of time determined by symptoms and duration of illness, as well as the medical opinion; and, conditions for their re-admittance to school would be based upon recovery and medical opinion and/or tests. None of these symptoms indicate that the individual has COVID-19, but are indicators that require further examination.
    - Fever or chills
    - Cough
    - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
    - Fatigue
    - Muscle or body aches
    - Headache
    - New loss of taste or smell
    - Sore throat
    - Congestion or runny nose
    - Nausea or vomiting
    - Diarrhea

We have identified an “isolation room” (beside the health office) to accommodate students who exhibit symptoms consistent with COVID-19 until a parent or guardian arrives.

Ashford has created a consistent policy for dismissal of students or staff who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 and must be dismissed from school in so far as students or staff suspected of contracting the virus will be sent home, required to visit their doctor, get an exam and medical opinion, and tested if recommended. They will then be required to stay at home until symptoms end, or for fourteen days if COVID-19 is suspected or diagnosed. Faculty or staff must have a negative test prior to returning to work.

## **Cancellation of Classes, Remote Learning and Reopening Plans**

Ashford School District will follow and adhere to all of the Connecticut Department of Public Health specific community and school-based indicators created to assist leaders and define the appropriate decision-making approach.

We have developed a plan for school class cancellations and reopening to be implemented in the event that the superintendent, their designee, or state government suspends or cancels in-school classes for some or all participants, as follows:

- A decision to close the school must be either ordered by the CSDE or come directly from the Superintendent after consultation with the Board of Education, the EHHD, as well as consultation with the Ashford School Medical Advisor.
- Parents will be notified of the decision immediately using all means of communication available.
- Our closure will include a communication plan and clear policies for faculty and staff regarding individual roles and responsibilities in the event of a shutdown occurring during the school year.
- The decision will be based upon the outbreak and contact tracing results after consultation with the EHHD.
- Duration of the closure must be a minimum of fifteen school days and be determined by the results of the medical situation as evaluated by the EHHD, our medical advisor, superintendent and response team.
- We will notify and consult with the CSDE immediately if we are contemplating class cancellations.
- We will prioritize ongoing educational opportunities during the shutdown. Materials for continuity of learning will be made available to allow for school sessions to continue remotely.
- Distance learning lessons will be provided by the teaching staff during any school closure.
- Laptops are available for loan to all students who do not have access to a computer at home.
- Families without internet access must notify the school to obtain assistance in getting access throughout the closure.
- The decision to return to classes and end the school closure must be determined by the results of the medical situation as evaluated by the EHHD, our medical advisor, superintendent, and response team.

## **Future Planning for Remote Blended Learning**

Ashford is prepared to provide remote blended learning opportunities immediately upon cancellation of in-school classes.

We conducted a survey of families, including students, about how remote learning worked for them during the school closure last year. We held several meetings over the summer to discuss ideas about remote learning with parents, teachers, and school staff. We conducted a separate survey this summer of our parents/guardians regarding their initial plans for either in-school or at-home instruction, transportation, meals, general thoughts, or concerns. In consideration of this feedback, we designed a specific plan for implementing a learning schedule that will work for both in-person instruction and at-home instruction. This will allow us to implement a smooth transition to all students learning from home. We are also looking at the possibility of a hybrid where all students participate in a remote-style instruction with some students allowed in the building for supervision and support.

We have developed a plan for extended absences and will communicate it with parents or guardians in the event of a second extended closure. Our plan includes specific requirements for students and teachers regarding the number of minutes of direct instruction over Zoom for academic as well as social emotional development and support.

## **Ashford School District Special Education Plan**

Ashford School District understands that there has been no waiver of requirements under the IDEA for the provision of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). During COVID-19 school closures, schools are required to provide FAPE consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students, as well as those individuals providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to these students. A plan is being developed with each family individually according to the students IEP. Students receiving in school services will have those services provided as outlined in the IEP. Families deciding not to send their students to the school will have a plan developed with the school team to ensure the student's IEP is being addressed in the remote setting. Progress monitoring will take place to ensure the student is making progress.

Federal disability law allows for flexibility in determining how to meet the individualized needs of students receiving special education services. Ashford School District will plan for students eligible for special education and other special populations as general education students first. The guidance and policies related to the school reopening plan will apply to all students, including students with special needs who qualify for individual education programs under the IDEA and accommodation plans for eligible students under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

1. Blended learning schedules will be utilized, if needed, when students with disabilities are unable to access the reopening plan as designed, facilitate individualized and alternative means of re-entry based upon student need, present levels of functioning, developmental levels, and student/parent input. All plans will be developed in collaboration with the school based team and family.
2. Programming decisions will not be based on a student's disability category. However, the nature and/or severity of a student's disability may require unique considerations. Protocols will consider the student's developmental level and skills, and a plan will be developed between the families and the school based team.
3. Mask and face coverings will be used for the population of special education students according to what is documented in the individuals plan. All staff will have access to masks and face shields where appropriate, and will maintain safe social distancing as appropriate for the individual student.
4. Ashford School District plan will be adjusted accordingly to comply with the State Department of Special Education policy and procedure guidelines as they are made available.
5. Special Education teachers will be assigned to specific cohorts of students according to grade level, and will be following all cleaning and health protocols outlined in the school plan. Service providers will also be following all cleaning protocols and will be provided with the PPE necessary to fulfill their positions. Groupings of students will be in compliance with their individual needs in accordance with the health and safety of all.
6. Ongoing training around the health and safety protocols will be done according to the State of Connecticut's guidelines.

## **Special Education Operational Addendum**

Because special education is based upon individual needs as determined by the I.E.P. process, and encompasses complex individualized strategies, a special education addendum has been prepared and accompanies this plan.

## **English Learners (ELs)**

Ashford School District understands that like all other students, ELs are entitled to FAPE. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IV, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (1974) and the Elementary and Secondary

Education Act (1965) provide guidance on the services to which ELs are entitled. ELs must have access to the general education curriculum as well as to a supplemental language instruction education program. During school closures due to COVID-19, ELs continue to be entitled to receive their supplemental EL instructional program in addition to their general education program of mainstream, grade level and content area instruction. When returning to school buildings, language instruction education programs will continue.

Ashford School District complies with the requirement that eligible students are offered a bilingual education program. However, we offer English Language Learner (ELL) services approximately five to six students per year.

Ashford School District plans to communicate with parents and guardians that have limited proficiency in English in a language they understand as required by Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We understand that as during traditional schooling, communications during school closures due to COVID-19 may be provided through translation and/or interpretation.

Ashford School District will provide ELs, who are also identified as students with disabilities, with supports for their EL needs, as well as supports for their disabilities, during COVID-19. As in times with traditional schooling, dually identified students will have their language needs represented in their annual meetings about their IEP.

### **Pre-School and Kindergarten Operations**

Both pre-school and kindergarten are grades that service much younger students, and therefore require special rules and protocols. Pre-school and kindergarten guidance will be available to all families of pre-school and/or kindergarten students prior to the opening of school.

### **Ashford Family Support and Communication**

We are fully prepared to comply with all state and federal family engagement requirements (e.g., School Governance Councils and Title I requirements) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are in the process of preparing a COVID-19 PANDEMIC PARENT GUIDE HANDBOOK to provide families with clear and ongoing communication about what to expect, during and prior to reopening. This includes, but is not limited to, guidance on the school protocols related to health and safety guidelines. This document will be completed prior to the opening of school and students returning to classrooms.

Introduction to the handbook will be part of a process of continued engagement with families and students as the reopening moves forward to ensure that they are informed and have the ability to provide feedback. This handbook, along with our reopen plans, will be available on the school website, and will clearly identify the school liaison.

### **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Mental Health**

Ashford School District has developed a detailed plan to reengage all students, staff and families. Particularly identifying strategies to identify and engage populations and specific students that have been disengaged. The plan administrator is our assistant principal who has participated fully in all trainings and has been engaged in dialogue with our trained staff instructor team.

A core group of faculty have been trained in social emotional learning and are prepared to present to the staff during our August staff professional development days regarding best practices in SEL, and how to identify issues related to abuse and neglect, generally and specifically in the context of the pandemic, and the procedures to comply with all mandated reporting requirements.

### **After School Programming**

Our after school programming is available to all students and is fully funded by the Ashford Board of Education.

After school clubs shall begin in January or when supported by the data and the pandemic in the region. After School clubs and activities are subject to the same safeguards as those in place during the school day.

During the period of the pandemic, we have initiated mitigation rules designed to protect students and staff.

1. Groups will be limited in size. An average of ten per group.
2. Sessions will be one hour in duration.
3. All students and staff will wear masks while inside.
4. Social distancing will be employed where possible.
5. The school year is divided in trimesters and groups will remain together for one trimester.

The school will not be available for use by outside groups from September to January, with the exception of the after school daycare provided by the YMCA under the rules of this plan.

### **Career, Technical Education, and Media Center/Library Use**

Our plan for cleaning and disinfecting shared equipment in the Media Center and Computer lab, before and after each use is as follows:

1. Classes will not be scheduled back-to-back, but will have a period between them for cleaning.
2. An approved disinfectant on a cloth will be used on the keyboards, desks, chairs, and monitors of all equipment stations.
3. All technology equipment throughout the school will be disinfected daily, with use by multiple students discouraged unless cleaning between users is carried out.
4. All books or items that are available for checking out will still be available, and will be disinfected between uses.

### **Staffing and Personnel**

#### **Certification and Personnel Planning**

We have fully prepared with the Superintendent, Principal and Board Counsel to comply with legal and regulatory requirements related to personnel, including but not limited to, the EEOC.gov guidance, ADA, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Professional Development**

Ashford School District has prioritized mandatory training for staff scheduled before the beginning of the school year that covers signs and symptoms of COVID-19, Standard Public Health protocols, Hygiene Practices, PPE, Reporting Illnesses, and supporting SEL. Ongoing trainings will be conducted as changes occur in recommendations and public health data.

## **Ashford School District Access/Reopening Plan Conclusion**

This plan lays out the basic premise for our school reopening. It is intended to be a living document that undergoes constant review, and subsequent improvement. Our intention is to have three fully operational designs for instructional delivery: a full in-person return to class with a stay at home distance learning option for parents who choose not to have their children return to school; a full distance learning model for all students; and, a hybrid plan that involves partial attendance in school and partial distance learning, dividing the school in half to minimize social contact.

There is an executive summary available that may be preferable to some readers, and special education also has an addendum that provides the families of special education students with more detail regarding how the district plans to meet the needs of special education students. Both the executive summary and the special education addendum will be posted on our website with this plan.

Thank you for reading our plan, and feel free to contact the school if you have any questions. This plan is designed to inform, and intended to communicate, that Ashford School District has a sound and safe plan for our operations and serving our students.