



Mr. Thomas W. Giard III
Superintendent of Schools

Mr. Craig C. Powers
Assistant Superintendent

February 18, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians:

At the last night's Waterford Board of Education Special Meeting, the return to full in-person learning phase-in approach was presented to the Board and the plans moving forward were reviewed. We will begin the phase-in to full in-person learning for PK-8 beginning the week of March 15, 2021 and we build from there. A phased-in approach allows time for adjustment and continued monitoring of COVID-19 trends. As I said last night, our learning models are a week-to-week decision as we will continue to be safe for staff and students. We have received many questions and will be releasing regular FAQs to address any and all of your questions.

Our phased-in plan to return to full in-person learning is based on the most recent guidance from public health and medical experts. We also know that students learn best in a classroom and the best form of learning is in-person learning. Our plan is safe, deliberate, and thorough. Our state and district reopening plans, developed last summer, were designed to address all three learning models; full distance learning; hybrid; and full in-person learning. All mitigation strategies remain in place and include, but not limited to mandatory masks; strict classroom cohorts; frequent handwashing; thorough cleaning; and maximizing social distancing.

For this plan to be effective, I strongly urge you to follow other parts of public health guidance concerning your own family's activities. It will take our entire community adhering to best practices in order to keep our schools open. Please keep your child home if they are not feeling well at all times. It would also be prudent to keep your child home if anyone in your household is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms in case of a probable positive within the family.

K-8 grade levels as well as transition students will follow the phase in to full in-person learning based on the schedule below.

Date	Grade Level	Current Model	Learning Design Changes
March 15	PK	4 Days	5 Days
	K – 2	Hybrid	4 Days
	6	Hybrid	4 Days
March 22	3 – 5	Hybrid	4 Days
	7 – 8	Hybrid	4 Days
March 29	K – 8 Ages 18-22 Transition Students	4 Days	5 Days

WHS will remain in the hybrid model at this time but will increase in-person learning time in the building utilizing alternating Wednesdays. WHS Administration will send a separate email to just the high school community about the Wednesday schedule.

March 29	Grade 9 - 12	Students will remain in Hybrid Cohorts of 1 & 2 Cohorts will be in person on alternating Wednesdays
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As we prepare for this next phase of in school learning, we ask that staff, students and families continue to utilize the mitigation strategies that have been in effect throughout this school year (social distancing, mask wearing, hand washing etc.). As a team reaching for the common goal of returning all students to full in-person learning safely, we look forward to working collectively to bring our school community back together and in a safe and thoughtful manner for staff and students based on the latest guidance from the experts.

Fulltime distance learning remains a choice for all families per the State of CT and any families wishing to revert to distance learning may do so by filling out the [distance learning form](#). Conversely, any family who has been on fulltime distance learning wishing to return must notify their school's administration as soon as possible. There is no option for the hybrid model during full in-person learning. Students are either full-in or full distance learning. In the coming days, we will send updated guidance to distance learning families about our updated distance learning model and expectations as distance learning will maintain some synchronous learning but will see increased asynchronous learning as about 75-80% of our students will be in the classroom.

District Messages, FAQs, Presentations and District Forms can be accessed on the Waterford Public Schools website at [School Learning Model Update – Spring 2021](#). We will be issuing a parent FAQ next week as we continue to collect questions and feedback.

You can also find our full original reopening plan which covers all three learning models (full distance, hybrid, full in-person) at [Fall 2020 Reopening Plan](#). The original reopening plan's practices, protocols, and procedures remain in effect as we transition to a different learning model.

Please feel free to contact me during this time of transition. The reopening schools email (reopening@waterfordschools.org) remains active and of course, please reach out directly to your child's school administration. Schools will be issuing their own communications in the ensuing days concerning any changes to logistics such as arrival, dismissal, recess, lunch etc.

We look forward to bringing our students back to campus and moving forward into this next phase of reopening our schools.

Sincerely and be well,
Tom

Thomas W. Giard III
Superintendent of Schools