

Maintain In-Person Learning and Continuity of Services Plan



EASTCONN K-12 Schools and Programs 2021-2022 School Year

A report based on guidelines provided by the
Connecticut State Department of Education

Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together (CSDE, 2020)

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Dear EASTCONN Families, Students, Staff and Stakeholders,

Over the past 18 months, our EASTCONN community has courageously faced challenges and overcome obstacles brought on by an unprecedented pandemic. Throughout this time, we have continued to maintain our compass on our true north, the safety, well-being and continuity of learning of our children. Staff learned new and novel ways to engage and teach. Technology provided us the tools to create 1-to-1 learning, provide access to students and families and adjust learning models when needed. In all of our schools and programs, we were able to remain fully in school through hybrid schedules.

The past 18 months has demonstrated, *together*, we can do anything and together we make a difference in the lives of our students, families and each other. We are confident, as we carry our learning from last year into the 21-22 school year, we will continue to learn, apply and ensure continuity of learning for every child's success. This introductory letter serves as an overview of EASTCONN's careful planning for the safe return to a fully in person learning model for the 21-22 school year.

Our planning was guided by the following focus areas:

- The health and safety of all members of our schools and programs;
- Social emotional well-being of all members of our schools and programs;
- Continuity of a fully in-person instruction and learning acceleration;
- A strong focus on family and community partnerships in the learning process;
- Flexibility, adaptability and optimism in all aspects of our planning as the pandemic requires us all to pivot and shift quickly to meet the needs of all of our learners.

In addition, EASTCONN approaches all advancement work, including this document, with our core strategic improvement documents in mind:

- Core Beliefs (The Why);
- Vision of an EASTCONN Learner/Graduate (The What);
- Framework for Personalized Learning (The How); and
- With a focus and understanding on DEIJ (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice).

By utilizing our core advancement focus in the planning process, we have ensured that academic excellence, social emotional well-being, collaborative partnerships and equitable access are at the center of all or planning especially in the areas of personalized, student-centered teaching, learning and assessment.

Our 2021-2022 Maintain In-Person Learning and Continuity of Service Plan has been modified from our 2020-2021 Return to School Plan to address the changing landscape of the pandemic while taking lessons learned from the past 18 months to focus upon engaging best practices. We will not be offering a remote learning option. It is expected all students will return to full in person learning. We anticipate a more normal school schedule and structure will reconnect and reengage learners.

Remaining flexible, prepared to pivot on a dime, remains a reality for all schools and programs. Modeling optimism is also vital for our students and their ability to cope with the ever-changing landscape related to the continued pandemic. With flexibility, optimism and our work together we will get through this time, learning lessons along the way that will strengthen and build all of our resilience.

We are committed to regular and ongoing communication and welcome your ongoing feedback and input. The following document is considered a live and evolving plan that will be modified and adjusted according to developing insights and guidance from the SDE, CDC and other guiding agencies.

On behalf of EASTCONN Schools and Programs, thank you for your service, partnership, patience, support and flexibility as we continue to navigate and ensure continuity of learning during this transformational time.

In addition, I extend my sincere and deepest appreciation to our outstanding teachers, faculty, staff and administration for their tireless efforts and unwavering dedication to ensure an inspiring school year for all students.

Sincerely,
Diane Dugas
EASTCONN Director of Teaching and Learning
And Superintendent Designee

Plan Development Timeline

The federal government requires that each Local Education Agency (LEA) create a Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan. The state of Connecticut published the [“Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan”](#) template to assist LEAs in developing a comprehensive plan for an in-person learning model for the 2021-2022 school year. While state-level guidance continues to evolve about the requirements for next year, the information contained in this evolving document is the most relevant information as to the model of instruction and the health and safety measures planned to date that will be in effect for the 21-22 school year. A “safe re-opening” refers to adherence and guidelines from the State of Connecticut, the CDC, our local health districts and other sources that will ensure that school environments support continuity of learning during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A core belief in learning is that students and staff need to be connected to each other, coaches, mentors, interventionists, grounded in data and instruction delivered through a personalized model. As we return to our “new normal” we will be ready and flexible.

EASTCONN values contributions and suggestions from parents, guardians, students, partners and other stakeholders in the plan. All stakeholders are invited to give regular feedback and suggestions related to our plan to reopen and to progress through the year.

Date	Event
<p>Public Comment and Periodic Review Process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEAs are required to periodically review and, as appropriate, revise their 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. • June 23, 2021 • December 23, 2021 • June 23, 2022 • December 23, 2022 • June 23, 2023 <p>After taking into account public comment, below are the dates that LEAs must submit a refreshed or updated plan to CSDE via eGMS.</p> <p>Review/Revisit Dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 23, 2021 • December 23, 2021 • June 23, 2022 • December 23, 2022 • June 23, 2023

June 23, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An opportunity for input related to the reentry and funding plan was provided via stakeholder meetings for parents, staff and students. COMPLETED
December 23, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An opportunity for input related to our Continuity of Learning Plan was provided in combination of a feedback survey and stakeholder meetings.• Link to the survey form for providing comments, feedback and suggestions can be found here: https://forms.gle/7dHuPdnyMtDvUkud8

District and School Liaisons

EASTCONN District COVID Liaison:

Diane Dugas, Director of Leading and Learning and Superintendent Designee
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Amy Margelony, Director of Pupil Services amargelony@eastconn.org

Program	Address	Phone Number	Principal
ACT	896 Main Street Willimantic, CT 06226	860-465-5636	Sarah Mallory smallory@eastconn.org
QMC	742 Upper Maple Street Danielson, CT 06239	860-932-4040	David Brown dsbrown@eastconn.org
NRP	79 Westfield Avenue Danielson, CT 06239	860-779-6794	Kurt Mias kmias@eastconn.org
EVC	14 Route 66 Columbia, CT 06237	860-228-4317	Greg Biggs gbiggs@eastconn.org
EAP	10 Commerce Drive Columbia, CT 06237	860-228-3240	Nicole Constantine nconstantine@eastconn.org
RTS	742 Upper Maple Street Danielson, CT 06239	860-928-6575	Christine DiGiacomo cdigiacomo@eastconn.org
District Nursing Supervisor	79 Westfield Avenue Danielson, CT 06239	860-779-6794	Katrina Cote kcote@eastconn.org

Guiding Principles

Modeled on the six guiding principles put forward by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and the Reopen Connecticut Committee, these are the six guiding principles that have shaped EASTCONN’s Maintain In-Person Learning plan:

	<p>Health & Safety</p>	<p>Protecting the health & safety of all students and staff</p>
	<p>Relationships & Joy</p>	<p>Safeguarding the mental and social-emotional wellness of our students and staff. Extra planning and care is ongoing to ensure our learning environments are personalized, connected and joyful.</p>
	<p>Continuity of Learning & Growth</p>	<p>Continuing to provide personalized, rigorous, relevant and engaging instruction for our students to learn and grow.</p>
	<p>Flexibility & Adaptability</p>	<p>Monitoring the health of the school and community populations and, when necessary, quickly pivoting to alternative models of instructional delivery.</p>
	<p>Equity, Access & Opportunity</p>	<p>Emphasizing equity, access and opportunity in support for ALL students to learn and grow.</p>
	<p>Family & Community Partnership</p>	<p>Fostering strong two-way communication with partners such as students, families, faculty and staff and our regional partners.</p>

In addition to these priorities outlined by the CSDE, EASTCONN schools and programs will take into account the requirements and guidelines presented in *Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut’s Plan to Learn and Grow Together.*

Learning Model and Continuity of Services

<p>In-Person Learning Model</p>	<p>In-person learning is the instructional model for the 2021-2022 school year. As long as public health data continues to support this model, all schools will provide in-person instruction for all students ONLY.</p>
<p>Remote Learning/Hybrid Model</p>	<p>This will not be an option in the 2021-2022 school year except in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially a short-term or a long-term closing as a result of increased transmission of COVID-19 within one of our schools or programs or directed by the Governor. These decisions are made in consultation with local DPH.
<p>Continuity of Academics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum, assessment and instructional practices continue to be high quality, follow the grade-level standards. • Focus on building a strong community built upon strong peer and adult relationships. Continue to support student social and emotional learning throughout the curriculum. • Determine student needs through a data-driven process and ensure that all students receive support and extension opportunities based on their needs. • Continue to leverage technology to accelerate student learning. • Continue to have a plan for hybrid or full-remote learning based on the EASTCONN's <u>2020-2021 Return to School Plan</u> should this be deemed necessary.
<p>Continuity Performances and Outside of School Day Activities</p>	<p>For the following areas, the approach will be adjusted if required to do so by the Connecticut Department of Public Health.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All activities and performances outside of school hours may resume in full. All activities and performances must follow the same layered mitigation strategies and contact tracing requirements as the school day. • Local field trips may resume and all staff and students must follow the rules of either the school or the venue, and err on the side of the more restrictive requirements. All field trips will be optional and must be approved by the principal. • All schools and programs are required to follow DPH guidance on mitigation practices. Thus, these elements of our plan are subject to change given health trends throughout the coming school year.

<p>Continuity of Mental and Emotional Wellness Focus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EASTCONN schools and programs are participating in CTSDE partnership with Aperture using the DESSA assessment tool with all students to assess students’ social emotional wellbeing. • Educators will engage in professional learning on proactive strategies to build positive relationships, connections and use of the DESSA data for positive interventions. • Schools all have implemented SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) strategies embedded daily in academics, including student profiles and strategies that address student emotional awareness and regulation. • Extra support and outreach will be offered to families and students who are experiencing high absenteeism or disengagement from learning.
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<p>Continuity of Specialized Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All language instruction programs for English Learners will continue. • As always, all programming decisions for students with special education needs will be based on their individual IEP needs and comply with all federal and state mandates.
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<p>Continuity of Health and Food Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to offer a breakfast and lunch program in all schools and programs in accordance with state and federal guidelines for the 2021-2022 school year. • Resume serving food in place of prepacked meals where possible.
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<p>Continuity of Communication and Partnerships with Families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to communicate with families on a regular basis to provide the most up-to-date information about health and safety trends and strategies for prevention and containment of COVID-19. Frequent email updates and updates to the EASTCONN School and Program websites are the primary communication methods. • Continue to engage families in information sharing, feedback collection and partnership opportunities in order to build a strong, collaborative community in support of all of our students. • Continue to provide remote options for meetings to give parents more opportunities to participate in a variety of meetings and forums. • Provide opportunities for each student and family to receive home visits for the purpose of building working relationships and supporting family needs.
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Health and Safety Strategies: Layered Mitigation Strategies

Health and Safety Strategies

Stay Home When Ill	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the signs and symptoms of COVID to determine if you are well enough to go to school• Stay home if Ill: Students or staff must stay home if they are feeling sick and/or have symptoms consistent with COVID-19. Any individual with a fever greater than 100.4 degrees F should stay home and contact a healthcare provider.
Face Coverings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will follow the guidance of the State of Connecticut and CDC mandated mask policy.• Masks are required to be worn for any individual within the school building. Masks must be worn properly and cover the nose and mouth in all indoor areas and transportation.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Mask breaks will continue to be provided.○ Masks will be removed for eating as long as proper social distancing is maintained.• We will continue to monitor CTSDE, CT-DPH and CDC for recommendations to determine any future guidance on mask wearing.• Families of students with special accommodations and require specialized accommodations in respect to masks should contact their principal to discuss.
Social Distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will comply with CDC guidelines, currently 3 feet between students.• Dividers and desk shields will no longer be required as a barrier between individuals. The use of desk shields may be an option in certain cases or for certain individuals who feel this provides an extra layer of safety.
Cohorting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We resume regular classroom travel between classes, eliminating instructional cohorting unless health data or CDC requires a change in practice.• We will continue to monitor which groups of students were together for the purpose of contact tracing.

Frequent Hand Washing or Sanitizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and staff will continue to engage in frequent hand washing and sanitizing including, upon arrival, before and after meals, after bathroom use, after returning to the classroom from another area and after coughing or sneezing. • Direct instruction on proper hand washing and hand sanitizing will be provided, as will frequent reminders to wash and sanitize hands.
Respiratory Etiquette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CDC recommends covering coughs and sneezes as a way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other airborne illnesses. • Immediately discard any tissues used and wash hands with soap and water if you used your hand to cover your mouth/nose.
Sanitizing Materials and Work Surfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools and programs will continue their current cleaning protocols. Bathrooms and high touch surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected regularly. • Students will be encouraged to sanitize hands after using any shared materials.
Student Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buses will continue to implement some level of assigned seating and/or social distancing on the bus, as appropriate. • Mask wearing is required on buses by drivers and students. • Windows will be opened for ventilation as weather permits. • Buses will be cleaned daily.
Visitor Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All visitors must continue to sign in and out for contact tracing purposes. • Visitors must comply with all mitigation strategies inside schools.
Health Protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EASTCONN in collaboration with SDE, CT-DPH, CDC and local DPH's and our Medical Advisor will update Health Protocols as needed.

Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities

Cleaning and Disinfecting Protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• EASTCONN Schools and Programs will continue to utilize cleaning and disinfecting protocols for the foreseeable future. Frequently touched surfaces will be disinfected on a regular basis.• Cleaning supplies will be provided to all classrooms so that students and teachers may use them liberally to wipe down frequently touched surfaces as needed.• Training will be provided to various staff to make sure that all mitigation strategies, hygiene practices and cleaning/disinfecting protocols are properly maintained.
Ventilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• EASTCONN facilities will continue to ensure that all HVAC systems are operating in accordance with the most up-to-date guidelines• EASTCONN facilities will follow all recommended strategies for the airflow and exchange of air in classrooms and other indoor spaces.• EASTCONN has consulted the <u>CDC Guidance for Ventilation in Schools</u> to ensure we are complying with health recommendations.

COVID-19 Containment Strategies

<p>Stay Home When Ill</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize the Daily Health Screening to determine if you are well enough to go to school. • Stay Home If Ill: Students or staff must stay home if they are feeling sick and/or have symptoms consistent with COVID-19. Any individual with a fever greater than 100.4 degrees F should stay home and contact a healthcare provider.
<p>Contact Tracing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EASTCONN Schools and Programs will continue to implement the contact tracing protocols as it did during the 2020-2021 school year. • Quarantining is NOT required for students or faculty/staff who have been fully vaccinated AND are asymptomatic. • Quarantining is not required for students seated at least 3 feet from a positive peer in classrooms if both students were properly wearing masks and the non-positive students are asymptomatic (applies only to students).
<p>Isolation/Quarantine Guidance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EASTCONN will determine the end date of the isolation or quarantine in accordance with the most up-to-date requirements from the State of CT Health Department and CDC.
<p>COVID-19 Testing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If an individual experiences symptoms consistent with COVID-19 the person should consider getting a COVID-19 test, even if vaccinated. • If an unvaccinated staff or student has symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual is required to be tested. The individual shall not return until the negative test results are shared with the school.
<p>Vaccinations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff vaccinations are now required by September 27, 2021; additional information will be forthcoming. • Parents are encouraged to vaccinate their children (at ages where this applies). Vaccinations for COVID-19 are required for any student taking college classes in partnership with QVCC.
<p>Travel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandates and requirements regarding travel will follow CSDE and CDC guidance. Residents and visitors to Connecticut are strongly urged to follow travel-related guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT DPH). Guidance.

