



EAST LYME PUBLIC SCHOOLS

P.O. Box 220 • East Lyme, Connecticut 06333 • (860) 739-3966 • Fax (860) 739-1215

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February 10, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians:

At this past Monday night's Board of Education Meeting, we shared a detailed plan of our intent to begin returning our students to full in-person learning. COVID metrics (declining case numbers) and support from the health professionals we work with are allowing us to begin phasing our students back into school, while eliminating the hybrid model of instruction. In collaboration with Ledge Light Health District, a trend of three weeks of declining cases across our region was necessary in order to entertain a safe return of children. This decline in case numbers has occurred each week since January 16, 2021. Hence, we are beginning the phase in process **starting with our elementary students.**

In planning for this return, it's essential that we provide our administration and staff time to plan for the reentry of children after what has been almost a full year of disruption. Concerns are noted from many staff, families, and students with the engagement of this process. We understand that concern and fear of many, and that is why we intend to phase in each grade level to slowly fill our buildings. A gradual approach to bringing students back will be viewed differently and supported by some (who want a slow process) and not supported by others (who want an immediate return of all students). We understand the differing of opinions, we have heard from both sides, and we are respectful of the varied feelings expressed by many. The gradual approach to reentry of our students supports everyone and minimizes fears and anxiety that will be in place for many. Additionally, Administration needs to address additional mitigation requirements and potential needs for staff and students. We remain focused on safety for all through this process.

The schedule below outlines the timeline for each grade level's return to the building. As Cohorts A and B are dissolved, each classroom will now reform to create a cohort of their own:

Grade Level	Start Date
Grades K, 1	March 1, 2021
Grade 2	March 15, 2021
Grades 3, 4	March 29, 2021
Five Day Return Date	May 3, 2021

The phased in approach maintains the M/T/Th/F schedule while allowing for one remote day each week (Wednesday). **As noted in the chart above a 5-day week for all elementary students begins on May 3, 2021.**

East Lyme Public Schools will inspire, engage and educate each student to become a contributing citizen and a responsible, independent, and critical thinker.



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Additional Important Information:

- We will be asking all elementary parents to complete a **survey by Friday February 12th at 4pm**, to help us gather information regarding reopening in full. This information will allow us to make informed decisions regarding a safe return of students. Elementary parents should be on the lookout for the **survey link**, which will be sent today.
- The Virtual Viking Program will remain in place for the rest of this school year. Those students/families that are part of this program will have the option to remain with their elementary Virtual Viking class and specific teacher. **Please note that any student change from a current Cohort A or B assignment to the Virtual Viking Program will still result in a child joining a new class and having a new Virtual Viking teacher.** Any Virtual Viking student is welcome and encouraged to return to full in person learning.
- We are in the process of developing the rollout for middle school students, which will be shared soon and aligns with our elementary phase in schedule. Please be on the lookout for further information. **Additionally, we are investigating high school options as well. No decision has been made yet regarding a return of students at the high school level at this time.**

We appreciate your support, patience, and understanding as we move through this transitional process. Returning our children to full in-person learning has been our goal all year long and doing so safely for all is at the forefront of all decisions that we continue to make. Our scheduled return of students will allow our children to leave us for the summer under a normal school schedule. This will help for an easier adjustment at the start of the 21-22 school year.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey R. Newton
Superintendent

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