THE RE-ENTRY:
GETTING BACK TO
INNOVATION AND EQUITY

2020–2021 Re-Entry Plan

MIDDLETOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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Dear Families and Stakeholders of Middletown Public Schools,

On March 13, 2020, Connecticut schools had an immediate stop to in-person instruction to protect staff and students from the spread of COVID-19. The transition to remote learning created a new education paradigm for families and students in Middletown, as well as across the state of Connecticut. During this time, Middletown Public Schools made radical shifts to provide instruction virtually; families learned how to support education through technology, and living spaces at home became classrooms for students. For twelve weeks, we navigated successfully through these new conditions. I personally want to thank you for the resilience during a time where our top priority was keeping our students, families, and staff safe and healthy.

In July, Governor Lamont and Commissioner Cardona announced that all Connecticut schools will reopen in some capacity using current environmental and health statistics. Because of Connecticut’s steady progress of minimizing the spread of the COVID-19, the State Department of Education recommended schools open to full capacity. In collaboration with the State of Connecticut, Middletown Public Schools will continue to utilize data-driven decision making to keep students and staff safe. The state-level decision does not mean we will return to our “old norm,” but a “now norm” that will fundamentally re-imagine education. New education models that include a strategic implementation of technology will change how we teach students, how we improve teaching and learning paradigms for our professional staff, and how we keep school environments safe for ALL. These are unique circumstances; they offer an opportunity for us to grow together.

The Middletown Public Schools Fall 2020 return to school plan entitled The Re-Entry: Getting Back to Innovation and Equity is a guidepost that is multi-dimensional. The first step is to ensure parameters are in place for a safe re-entry while leveraging our vision: Unlocking the potential in ALL students. It will be a complex task to get back to innovation and equity in an adaptive environment; however, with sustained partnerships that focus on the vision, I believe Middletown Public Schools will be a model to emulate. We must continue to ground innovation with instructional planning, elevate equity to close achievement and opportunity gaps that the pandemic has created, and provide operational conditions to prevent the spread of this dangerous virus. I am confident The Re-Entry: Getting Back to Innovation and
Equity plan will be a roadmap for the fall and beyond. Our goal is to create work that leverages our strategic operating plan: Middletown 2021: Keys to Innovation and Equity and beyond.

This is only a starting point for Middletown Public Schools. We are committed to working with all of our stakeholders in the coming months to monitor public healthcare data as it becomes available, this includes families, students, teachers, and external partners. Middletown Public Schools will continue to engage with all state and local entities so that our decision making processes provide a meaningful experience for our most important customers: families and students.

As we prepare to launch the 2020-2021 academic year, I would like to applaud you for your dedication to our community during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. We came together and identified solutions so families received meals, provided access to technology for all students, secured the necessary innovative professional learning for leaders and teachers, and supported our community during this radical shift in operations. The Middletown community is a model for all to emulate. We are adapting, learning, and growing together, and I will forever be grateful as we continue to provide the best education opportunities for ALL students.

Sincerely,

Michael T. Conner, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION:
Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, all facets of life have been impacted including education. Our plan for re-entry must take into account both forward thinking and future focus. It must be grounded in science, and incorporate the most accurate health and environmental data. This information will ensure high-quality learning experiences for ALL students within the context of our strategic operating plan Middletown 2021.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND DOMAINS:
The Re-Entry: Getting Back to Innovation and Equity plan provides our community, families, students, administrators, educators, and support staff with the necessary procedures and protocols for Middletown Public Schools to reopen safely. The necessary accommodations for ALL during these unprecedented times requires copious planning and preparation. Based on the Connecticut Department of Education’s plan for reopening, our work will be disaggregated into six domains. The domains address health, safety, academic, and fiscal policies, to advance our vision: unlocking the potential in ALL students.
The re-entry plan is for a full reopening for our schools; however, based on ongoing observations and health data, the MPS learning model may be adjusted for safety. Built into the plan are protocols for a hybrid and distance learning environment should those methods of education be the most appropriate based on health data. These changes will only occur with recommendations by the State of Connecticut, State Department of Education, and Middletown Health department.
It is critical that we address the basic safety parameters and protocols for learning. These include: technology needs, screening protocols, social distancing guidelines, and foundational practices to effectively transport students in a safe manner. All schools will maintain recommended physical distancing in addition to the use of student barriers and cleaning/disinfecting procedures. School staff, students, and selected visitors will be required to wear face masks especially if social distancing cannot be maintained.

**Required standards in this domain will outline:**
- General school guidelines for safety and health
- Transportation
- Movement of students within buildings and scientific-based safeguards
- Facilities: cleaning practices, procedures, and protocols
- Extra-curricular activities and building utilization outside of academic hours
- Meal distribution and in-school services
- Technology support, infrastructure and distribution
- Recess and Physical Education
“Due to positive containment efforts in Connecticut, reopening schools in person can be successfully achieved based upon current data. Connecticut has determined it is appropriate to plan a consistent approach to the operating model (schedule), but be prepared to modify plans as necessary. Maximizing in-person instructional time after the current period of disruption is critical. However, given the uncertainty planning for reopening months from now, schools must be prepared to modify their reopening model to support a partial reopening if the public health data changes.”

• In all stages and phases of pandemic response and recovery, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends actions, which schools and districts should incorporate into reopening plans:
  • Establishing and maintaining communication with local and state authorities to determine current mitigation levels in your community
  • Protecting and supporting staff and students who are at higher risk for severe illness, such as providing options for telework and virtual learning
  • Following CDC’s Guidance for Schools and Childcare Programs
  • Promoting behaviors that reduce spread:
    ◦ Stay home when appropriate
    ◦ Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
    ◦ Face coverings
    ◦ Signs and messages
  • Reasonable accommodations should be provided for individuals that the Centers for Disease Control identifies as having a higher risk for severe illness from COVID–19, including older adults (aged 65 years and older) and individuals with disabilities or serious underlying medical conditions, which may include:
DOMAIN 1: ENVIRONMENT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Chronic lung disease or asthma (moderate to severe)
- Serious heart conditions
- Immunocompromised
- Severe obesity (body mass index, or BMI, of 40 or higher)
- Diabetes
- Chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
- Liver disease
- Medically fragile students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- Students with complex disabilities with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- Students who require accommodations under a Plan in accordance with the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504 Plan).

- In addition to the general guidelines applicable to all districts aligned with the stages of reopening, each local school district must plan reopening in accordance with local conditions and resources.

- It may be helpful to consider how other countries have handled school reopening, particularly those in which COVID–19 rates peaked earlier than the United States. For example, the Learning Policy Institute’s Policy Brief, Reopening Schools in the Context of COVID–19: Health and Safety Guidelines from Other Countries examines the response to COVID–19 in five countries.

TRANSPORTATION

CONNECTICUT SAFE STATUS
VACCINE AVAILABLE OR EFFECTIVE TREATMENTS FOR COVID–19
FULL CAPACITY ON BUS
Bus transportation can operate with no restrictions

CONNECTICUT LOW STATUS
LOW TRANSMISSION RISK IN THE COMMUNITY OF COVID–19
UP TO FULL CAPACITY ON BUS
Bus transportation can operate up to full status with face coverings/mask requirements and loading and unloading restrictions

*This is the status for the beginning of the school*
CONNECTICUT MODERATE STATUS
MODERATE OR MORE SEVERE SPREAD OF COVID-19

LIMITED CAPACITY ON BUS
Bus transportation can operate with seating and spacing restrictions, face coverings / mask requirements, and loading and unloading restrictions.

REDUCED NUMBER OF STUDENTS
and seating based on strict social distancing guidelines

• Transportation status will be determined by the State of Connecticut and/or Department of Public Health.
  • In the “low status” currently determined to be the status of Connecticut, student passengers will be required to wear a face covering or mask that completely covers the nose and mouth during transit. The passenger’s face covering must be in place prior to boarding the bus and must be kept in place until they are completely off the bus. Passengers should 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. This will reduce the number of people passengers walk by as they get on the bus and will prevent crowding in the center aisle when the bus arrives for unloading.
  • If the state determines that we are in a “moderate status,” student passenger density will be significantly reduced because schools will be employing a hybrid model of learning (A-B days or A-B weeks) when in this status. Bus passengers should be spaced with family members sitting together and non-family members should be spaced six feet apart utilizing alternating diagonal seating. Passengers will be required to wear a face covering or mask that completely covers the nose and mouth during transit. The rider’s face covering must be in place prior to boarding the bus and must be kept in place until they are completely off the bus. Students should 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. This will reduce the number of people passengers pass by as they get on the bus and will prevent crowding in the center aisle when the bus arrives for unloading.
• Transportation to and from school by parents/guardians will be encouraged.
  • Parents are encouraged to transport their children to school to avoid possible exposure on the bus.
  • Parents will have to let the district know by August 3, 2020 if they will be able to transport their child.
• Parents/guardians will have to fill out a mandatory re-entry form in PowerSchool which will tell the district which students will be driven by parents at the start of the school year.

• Principals will assess if a staggered arrival and drop off of buses and cars will enhance safety protocols in place.

• Principals will plan vehicle flow and logistics, particularly if there are more family transport vehicles than typical.

• Principals will develop arrival/departure procedures that limit unnecessary entrance of parents and guardians into the building. Each school will allow for minimal contact of parents with school personnel and students while dropping off and/or picking up students during the day.

• There is a procedure at each school that allows for student drop off at the start of the day and student pick up at the end of the day without parents needing to enter the building.

• Proper hygiene habits will be practiced for bus transport.

• Parents of students in younger grades will be asked to assist in social distancing at bus stops and during pick-up and drop-off.

• Parents of students in younger grades will be asked to secure masks on students at bus stops prior to students entering the bus.

• Students will be required to wear a face covering or mask that completely covers the nose and mouth during transit.

• Hand sanitizer dispensers will be installed on the bus loading doors for students to use upon entry.

• Seating arrangements will be adjusted on buses to prevent students from passing one another while loading/unloading as much as possible.

   ◦ Students will only be permitted on the bus to which they have been assigned in order to minimize cross-contamination of student groups. Students will be expected to ride the same bus to school in the morning and the same bus to home in the afternoon every day. No exceptions.

• Bus drivers will follow the expectations for school employees regarding health and screening.

• Passive Screening: Drivers are instructed to self-screen before leaving for school by checking to ensure temperatures below 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit and to self-monitor for symptoms outlined by public health officials. Drivers are to stay at
home if they are feeling sick, have any symptoms associated with COVID-19, or have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19.

• Drivers with a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees are not permitted to drive. Drivers will only be allowed to return with a note from their healthcare provider, or with a documented negative COVID-19 test.

• All drivers will sanitize hands upon entering buses.

• Bus Drivers must wear face masks. These must always be worn when children are on the bus.

• Numbers of students on each bus will be monitored by the State and/or by local health officials.

  • Schools will ideally adjust schedules with as little impact as possible to the school day to meet transportation requirements. If extra runs are required to accommodate students and distancing expectations, students will not be penalized for arriving late to school.

• If the State of Connecticut adjusts social distancing guidelines due to a surge in COVID-19 the number of students on each bus may be adjusted. The schools will limit the number of students on buses based on guidelines issued from the State of Connecticut.
TRANSPORTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- In each of these scenarios there is a tremendous impact on classes with students arriving and departing at different times.

- Reduced size bus runs will result in adjusted bus routes resulting in “double runs” or “triple runs” resulting in staggered arrival times and dismissal times for students.

- A bus monitor employed by the school district will ride on the bus at all times and will ensure that students practice social distancing on buses. This requirement may impact the school’s ability to hold in-person schooling.

- The school schedule may be adjusted to meet the needs of social distancing on buses based on guidelines issued from the State of Connecticut.

- If the number of COVID cases are limited, the schedule may result in A-B day (alternating days) for students: “Monday & Wednesday” or “Tuesday & Thursday.” A-B weeks (alternating weeks) may be considered.

- Adjusted State Guidelines may result in an extended period of Distance Learning by all students.

Adjustments to bus expectations by the State of Connecticut (if needed or imposed) will greatly impact school schedules and/or the ability to hold school in-person.
Middletown Public Schools’ re-entry plan establishes the process and location for student and staff health screenings based on guidance found in *ADAPT, ADVANCE, ACHIEVE: Connecticut’s Plan to Learn and Grow Together*

- If physical distancing (six feet) cannot be maintained for individuals in line waiting to enter or exit a building, require utilization of face coverings. Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to help ensure that staff and students remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g. guides for creating “one-way routes” in hallways).
- Minimize interaction of students between drop-off and entrance to school facilities.
- Stagger arrival and drop-off times or locations by cohort or put in place other protocols to limit contact between cohorts and direct contact with parents as much as possible.
- Establish separate entrances and exits to school facilities where possible.
- Require visitors and parent/guardians use their own pen for signing in/out.
- Create “one-way routes” in hallways.
- Maintain social distancing in hallways and common areas.
- Minimize the number of non-essential interactions between students and staff throughout the school day.
- Create student cohorts as an effective strategy to limit exposure and contact.
- Limit commingling between classes or other district-set groups of students.
- Minimize large group gatherings.
- Create a system that allows for physical distancing.
- Provide hand sanitizer at school entrances.
- Put signage around school buildings to provide hygiene advice and reminders (CDC offers printable resources and handwashing posters).
• Increase frequency of cleaning all surfaces, including walls (to the appropriate height based on age of students).

• Limit the number of students in the hallway at the same time by staggering release from classrooms.

• If feasible, install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions, particularly in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least six feet apart (e.g., reception desks).

• Consider a schedule that limits access, if at all, to lockers to keep traffic in the hallways within social distancing protocols.

• Most schools have limited entry/exit points for security purposes, but additional entry/exit points may need to be established to ensure a balance of social distancing and security protocols.

**FACILITIES – CLEANING PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND PROTOCOLS**

• The Chief of Operations and Communications will ensure that high cleanliness standards are met prior to reopening and maintained during the school year. The Chief of Operations and Communications will oversee the reopening of each school building. High standards of cleanliness for all classrooms, bathrooms, hallways, and offices in the school will be addressed.

• Prior to reopening, the Board of Education will do a walkthrough of all buildings with the Superintendent of Schools, the building principal, and the Chief of Operations and Communications to review cleanliness expectations. In addition, they will conduct a review of reopening plans specific to each building.

• The Chief of Operations and Communications will communicate to staff and families the cleaning and hygiene protocols recommended by the State of Connecticut and the CDC.
• Plans for disinfecting high touch surfaces in each building will include:
  ◊ Door handles/knobs
  ◊ Handrails
  ◊ Drinking fountains
  ◊ Faucet handles
  ◊ Restroom counter surfaces
  ◊ Any items or materials that cannot be supplied to a specific student
  ◊ Playgrounds

• Frequently touched surfaces and other equipment will be cleaned throughout the day. Desks and classroom equipment should not be shared; however, those that are used by more than one group will be cleaned in between usage.

• Buildings will have a plan for disinfecting the following between uses:
  ◊ Desks that are shared during the day
  ◊ Tables that are used throughout the day
  ◊ Chairs that are shared during the day
  ◊ Classroom/office items, such as phones, headsets, copy machines, etc.

• Schools will work to enable no-touch usage of items such as doors, trashcans, and bathroom fixtures, where possible. (Where no touch technologies are not available, prop open doors in accordance with fire and safety codes, and remove trash lids.)

• Schools will maximize use of disposable towels in lieu of hand dryers, due to ventilation considerations. Where possible, schools will turn off and avoid use of hand dryers.

• As appropriate by age, schools will place a trash can and paper towel roll by the bathroom door to allow students and staff to use in order to prevent the touching of the door handle with hands.

• Principals will work with teachers to assess ways to minimize exposure from playground and fitness equipment use, including but not limited to ensuring only the team cohort uses it at the same time, hand washing before and after equipment use, use of hand sanitizer, and disinfecting fitness equipment or other smaller outside equipment after each group of students’ use.

• Bathrooms will be sanitized at least twice a day. Where possible, schools will consider designating separate bathrooms for different classes or establishing shifts for classes to use the bathroom, thus avoiding mixing of classes.
The Chief of Operations and facilities director will use products that are approved by the State of Connecticut and that are labeled to be effective against emerging viral pathogens. Staff will follow label directions for appropriate dilution rates and contact times.

Cleaning logs will be used in each building to track cleaning frequency of areas including bathrooms.

- The Chief of Operations and Communications will ensure that the schools comply with DPH guidelines including:
  - Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting of Schools during COVID-19
  - Return to Service Guidance for Building Water Systems
  - Guidance for School Systems for the Operation of Central and non-Central Ventilation Systems

- The Chief of Operations and Communications will ensure that schools meet distancing expectations by adjusting desk setup in all classrooms.

- The Chief of Operations and Communications will oversee a reopening plan for each building that specifically addresses social distancing for all classrooms, bathrooms, hallways, and offices in the school. The plan will include:
  - Maximizing social distancing between student workstations, achieving six feet if feasible (not required) when determining the classroom layout. Desks should face in the same direction (rather than facing each other) or students should sit on only one side of tables, spaced apart.
  - Assessing other spaces that may be repurposed for instruction in the school.
  - Maximizing space between the teacher and students due to the risk of increased droplets from teachers during instruction. If a teacher removes face covering or mask during instruction, spacing should be increased beyond six feet. For teachers who stay seated, a physical barrier may be considered an option.
  - Placing floor markings throughout classrooms and the school may be employed to illustrate social/physical distancing.

- The Board of Education will do a walkthrough of all buildings prior to reopening with
the Superintendent of Schools, the building principal, and the Chief of Operations and Communications to review distancing expectations as well as conducting a review of reopening plans specific to each building.

• The Chief of Operations and Communications and principals will work together to ensure that classroom furniture besides desks is adjusted to create the maximum amount of space between students.

• Classroom bookcases, reading nooks, and storage cabinets may be removed and/or repositioned to create the maximum amount of space between students.

• The Chief of Operations and Communications and principals will work together to ensure that a dedicated medical isolation room has been identified in every school building.

• School administrators will ensure that schools restrict the shared use of materials.

  • Principals will work to ensure that staff restrict the sharing of educational materials between individuals (including such items as books, manipulatives, computers, calculators, writing utensils, and art supplies). Teachers will ensure that there is a procedure for disinfecting any electronic devices, toys, books, and other games or learning aids that must be shared during the same school day.

  • When shared space is used by multiple cohorts of high school students not in cohorts, disinfecting of materials must occur in between the times when cohorts of groups of high school students use the space/materials.

  • Alternate seating or shared seating in reading nooks, group centers, and other areas will not be allowed. Items that cannot be cleaned and sanitized (such as shared stuffed animals in classrooms) will not be allowed.

  • Each student’s belongings/school supplies will be separated and in an individually labeled storage container, cubby, locker, or other designated area depending on the grade level and specific course. Students will be encouraged to take home belongings each day to be cleaned. Belongings such as personal stuffed animals and other toys will be strongly discouraged.

• The Chief of Operations and Communications will ensure that hand washing and sanitizing stations will be readily available.

  • Each school will ensure that staff, students, and visitors have access to soap and water and/or hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol at all times.
• The Chief of Operations and Communications will oversee a rapid response plan for suspected or confirmed cases of COVID 19.

• Each building will have a plan to close off areas used by any sick person and not reopening those areas or using areas before cleaning and disinfection. The Chief of Operations and Communications will oversee the proper cleaning of any such area.

OPERATIONS

• The Middletown Schools Health Supervisor will oversee staff training on the physical protection of the school community.

• The schools will provide mandatory staff training on the following as part of the reopening prior to the start of school:
  ◊ Symptom screening, including temperature checks, of both staff and students
  ◊ Physical distancing of staff and students
  ◊ Proper use of protective equipment
  ◊ The correct use of cloth face coverings / masks
  ◊ Cough and sneeze etiquette
  ◊ Keeping one’s hands away from one’s face
  ◊ Frequent hand washing and proper technique
  ◊ Confidentiality around health recording and reporting
  ◊ Training on trauma-informed practices and suicide prevention

• Staff training on the mental health wellness of students will be available throughout the year.
• The schools will provide staff training on the following (in addition to Social Emotional Learning expectations):
  ◊ Training on trauma-informed practices and suicide prevention.
  ◊ Youth Mental Health First Aid
  ◊ Confidentiality around health recording and reporting.
• Signage will be posted in schools that is highly visible as well as being accessible for students with disabilities.
• The Chief of Operations and Communications and principals will work together to ensure the distribution of information and regular communication about the actions school communities can take to stop the spread. Signs will be posted in highly visible locations (e.g., school entrances, staff areas, and restrooms) that promote everyday protective measures and provide instruction related to properly washing hands and properly wearing a cloth face coverings or masks. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/index.html
• The district will ensure that indoor facilities have adequate ventilation, including operational heating, and ventilation systems where appropriate.
  • Recirculated air must have a fresh air component.
  • Open windows if A/C is not provided.
  • Filter(s) for A/C units must be maintained and changed according to manufacturer recommendations.
• The Chief of School Operations will oversee school activities and athletics, which will be allowed in a limited capacity on a case-by-case basis.

• The school district will follow all CIAC (Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference) guidelines for middle school and high school sports after approval of such activities by the Superintendent of Schools.

• Athletic guidance and expectations will be provided in a separate document by the CIAC.

• After-school clubs, activities, and events must be approved in advance by the Chief of Operations. Approval will be based on the ability to meet the safety expectations of students and staff members involved.

• The Chief of Academics will work with the physical education teachers in adapting curriculum and activities to be in line with guidance found in Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut’s Plan to Learn and Grow Together. In general, activities will be limited to those that do not involve physical contact with other students or equipment until advised otherwise by state and local public health officials.

• The Chief of Academics will work with the art and music teachers in adapting curriculum and activities to be in line with guidance found in Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut’s Plan to Learn and Grow Together.

• Courses and activities that may involve any potential risk to students and staff must be approved in advance by the Chief of Academics and the Superintendent of Schools.

• School assemblies, concerts, and other programs with a larger number of students will be limited at the start of the school year and require approval of the Chief of Operations and the Superintendent of Schools. Decisions will be made based on size of activity, ability to maintain proper distancing and safety expectations.
• Field trips and off campus experiences will be suspended at the start of the school year. Field trips, when suspension is lifted, will require approval of the Chief of Academics and the Superintendent of Schools. Decisions will be made based on ability to maintain proper distancing and safety expectations. Virtual field trips will be encouraged.

MEAL DISTRIBUTION AND IN-SCHOOL SERVICES

• The Food Services Director will ensure compliance with federal guidelines and local health official guidelines and any additional guidelines introduced regarding child nutrition.

• The Food Services Director will actively promote and determine eligibility for and make available free and reduced-price meals and snacks and free milk to all eligible students.

• The Food Services Director will comply with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) regulations and policies (and any changes occurring) for school meals and milk.

• The Food Services Director will ensure that the schools claim all meals provided to eligible students in accordance with the USDA and the CSDE guidelines. Additionally, the number of free and reduced-price meals served and claimed for reimbursement must have the required documentation on file to support the claim.

• The Food Services Director will proactively plan and be prepared at all times throughout the year for expedited meal access during including a short period (2-5 days) and a longer period (2 weeks) of closure.

• The Food Services Director will oversee PPE for food service operations such as masks, gloves, and physical barriers in serving areas.

• Food service in each school will be designed to promote social distancing.
• The Food Services Director working with principals will determine the appropriate meal distribution method of meal service (Cafeteria Pick-up Model, Classroom Delivery Model, or a Hybrid Delivery Model) based on social distancing, physical location, student traffic, space, staffing, etc.

• Each school will communicate age-appropriate and school-appropriate strategies to families about school meal service and options. Meal service communications will include social distancing requirements and any additional school options as follows:
  ◊ Additional lunch waves to separate classroom cohorts;
  ◊ Staggering cafeteria use throughout the late morning/early afternoon;
  ◊ Increasing the number of meal service access points;
  ◊ Serving meals in cafeteria and then returning to classrooms or alternate locations;
  ◊ Serving meals in classrooms and alternate locations

• The principals will arrange for smaller lunch waves in each school. For all grades, more than one classroom cohort may be in the cafeteria with another cohort, but groups must remain separated from each other by a distance that is recommended to be at least fourteen feet.

• School cafeteria and meal service plans will be adjusted based on the level of concern of transmission set by the CDC and Department of Health.

• There will be no “share tables” or self-service buffets for food or condiments.

• Physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions at point of sale and other areas will be installed where maintaining physical distance of six feet is difficult.

• If meals are provided in classrooms or alternate locations, sufficient trash removal and cleaning will be in place.

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND DISTRIBUTION

In order to ensure high quality academic offerings regardless of in-person, hybrid, or distance learning, the district has considered the following areas:

• Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

• Support implementation of approved instructional applications
  ◊ Provide training and support for teachers in collaboration with software vendors

• Provide student safety tools for use and management of district devices
• Use of Space and Time
  • Provide and support resources for students and staff to continue instruction beyond the school day and school building creating a flexible learning environment

• Robust Infrastructure
  • Ensure all students have access to adequate internet connections to participate fully in online instruction.
  • Provide mobile hotspots to families in need of Internet access
  • Provide technical support to students and staff either at home or in school using appropriate means of communication, including phone and email.
  • Distribute appropriate devices for all students for distance and in-school instruction. Each student will have a designated district provided device to be used either in school or from home.
    ◦ Replacement devices will be available at each school for students who have technical issues.
    ◦ Devices by grade level:
      ◦ PK-1 iPads
      ◦ 2–8 Chromebooks
      ◦ 9–12 Windows Laptops

• Data and Privacy
  • Provide families and students with district technology policies
    ◦ One-to-One Device policy and student pledge
    ◦ Acceptable Use Policy
  • School staff will review policies with students

• Community Partnerships
  • Technical support for students and families participating in distance learning

• Personalized Professional Learning
  • Provide resources and learning opportunities for staff available beyond the typical school day

• Budget and Resources
  ◦ Ensure all staff have equipment to provide instruction in school or remotely if necessary.
  ◦ Ensure all students have devices to participate in online learning
• Recess time and use of playgrounds will be supervised and scheduled to ensure physical distancing. Recess time will be adjusted for specific classroom and/or cohorts.

• If two or more groups are participating in recess at the same time, they should have at least six feet of open space between them.

• Use cones, flags, tape, or other signs to create boundaries between groups.

• Always wash hands immediately after outdoor playtime.

• Stagger the use of playground equipment and establish frequent disinfecting protocols. Complete an inventory of outdoor spaces (athletic fields, track, green spaces, open space, and local parks) and designate zones, mark off areas, use stations, floor markers, floor tape, and poly spots to ensure separation among students (six feet for social distancing).

• Consider closing locker rooms to mitigate risk and prohibit students and staff from confined spaces with limited ventilation and/or areas with large amounts of high contact surfaces.
  • If not feasible to close, stagger use and clean and disinfect between use.
  • Students may be encouraged to wear comfortable clothing and safe footwear to school that allows for safe movement and is appropriate for the weather in order to participate in physical education without the use of a locker room.

• Mitigate risk, limit and/or eliminate direct contact with equipment (lessons with no equipment) and do not allow sharing of equipment. If equipment must be shared, clean and disinfect between each use.

• Designate specific areas for each class during recess to avoid cohort mixing.
Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, known equity gaps within our community have become more apparent. This is not limited to the achievement gap, but also engagement, health, and the natural well-being of our students. As we start to re-engineer the opening of our schools, social emotional learning (SEL), staff climate, and overall culture will be key practices in the plan. All schools will prioritize SEL so there is a systematic process of implementation. Mechanisms of SEL and equity will include:

- Support for **ALL** staff and students within our MSELI framework (Middletown Social Emotional Learning Initiative)
- Use of trauma informed practices within our multi-tiered system of support
- Comprehensive wraparound services to address academic, behavioral, and social emotional needs utilizing structured interventions
- Expanding community and university partnerships to address racial equity needs among our diverse population
- Strengthening family and community partnerships through strategic mentoring programs
Our students, families, staff and community partners have likely had experiences that impact the areas of social emotional learning and behavioral health. SEL is not new to Middletown; however, we will prioritize student and staff social and emotional well-being proactively and intentionally, knowing that our school community has experienced a variety of stressful and traumatic events. SEL work will be integrated fully into our academic programs in order to maximize existing systems, to provide more equitable access to all students, include trauma informed practice, integrate restorative practices and center SEL in racial equity.

This Domain is grounded in Middletown Strategic Operating Plan 2021 and Early Minds 2022 and aligned to Connecticut’s Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut’s Plan to Learn and Grow Together.

**Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut’s Plan to Learn and Grow Together** requires districts to develop a detailed plan to re-engage all students, staff and families, identify strategies to identify and engage populations and specific students that have been disengaged, and to prepare staff to identify issues related to abuse and neglect in the context of the pandemic. Additionally, the plan sets forth specific guidance related to Social Emotional Learning as follows:

- Provide time for students to acclimate back to school with a focus on the whole child with the purpose of reestablishing routines and relationships
- Intensify communication efforts with families and provide support for students who are struggling with health protocols or at risk
- Communicate the importance of SEL as a foundational and necessary aspect of a highly functioning school community
• Consult with available resources including the Collaborative for Academic, Social, Emotional Learning (CASEL)
• Consider staff needs in the areas of SEL and mental health
• Incorporate SEL and mental health support activities into online learning
• Incorporate the Kindergarten through Grade 3 Social, Emotional, and Intellectual Habits Framework

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

- Maya Angelou

**MECHANISMS FOR SEL AND EQUITY**

**INTEGRATION OF SEL PLANNING, TRANSITION AND REOPENING**

A

Middletown Public Schools Task Force: The Reopening Task Force will include an SEL subcommittee to inform, align and integrate SEL into the District reopening plan and contingency plans. The subcommittee will make recommendations to the Task Force related to critical practices for reconnecting, engaging and supporting students and adults. These critical SEL practices will be integrated into the reopening plan and lay the foundation for academic learning.

B

Prior to reopening, during reopening, and on an ongoing basis, the Task Force will make recommendations for staff professional development, SEL tiered intervention, related SEL activities, and supporting resources for implementation.
LEVERAGE CURRENT SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES TO ADDRESS SEL AND MENTAL HEALTH

The district will employ the Middletown Social Emotional Learning and Intervention (MSELI) Middletown’s framework for a Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to provide universal and preventative instruction to identify concerns and to provide tiered social emotional and behavioral health interventions. Evidence based social emotional and behavioral practices will be matched to identified district, school, class level and individual student SEL needs.

The District will engage in year one roll out of **RULER**: Recognizing emotions in oneself and others. Understanding the causes and consequences of emotions, Labeling emotions with a nuanced vocabulary, Expressing emotions in accordance with cultural norms and social context, Regulating emotions with helpful strategies.

**RULER APPROACH: FOUR ANCHOR TOOLS**

- **CHARTER**: Establish safety based on norms
- **MOOD METER**: Increase self-awareness and emotion regulation
- **META-MOMENT**: Manage response when triggered
- **BLUEPRINT**: Perspective taking

The district will employ Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education): Continue to utilize Project AWARE Grant to support professional learning, build capacity and build cohesive systems to fully address an MTSS design for SEL and behavioral health.
A comprehensive shared drive titled Middletown Social Emotional Learning Curriculum Drive has been developed and will be expanded and provided to all staff. Each school has also been provided with a comprehensive SEL Curriculum Library. Resources, materials and tools for instruction, assessment, professional learning and staff and student wellness are provided through these platforms including but not limited to specific resources to support reopening after Covid-19, community resources, employee wellness and self-care, equity, grief, Mindfulness and CHL, Pre-K to 12 curriculum, trauma informed practices, student mental health referral protocols and sample lesson plans.

PROVIDE ONGOING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN THE AREAS OF SEL AND MENTAL HEALTH

MPS will leverage Multi-tiered Systems of Support After COVID: a “train the trainers” model will be utilized to provide professional learning to all staff so that they are able to identify SEL and mental health best practices across the tiers, locate resources, are prepared to support students and have an awareness of the importance of self-care. Core tenets will emphasize supportive relationships and connections, equity, and the use of structured, less structured, and natural opportunities for SEL instruction. Professional learning will also stress the importance of the development of common language and the integration of SEL across content and will capitalize on natural teaching moments within existing social interaction. The goal is for all staff to have an awareness of student SEL needs and to have the ability to respond in real time. All District administrators will receive intensive professional learning prior to re-opening and will then deliver the professional learning module to their building level staff. Social emotional learning frameworks have been designed to be delivered in all phases of reopening, in person, hybrid, and distance.
MPS will ground work in research and evidence-based practice in order to ensure fidelity to the model, alignment, and coherence. Specifically, CASEL, Reunite, Renew and Thrive Roadmap for Reopening School, CASEL Framework for social & emotional competencies, *Urban Trauma, A Legacy of Racism* – Maysa Akbar, Ph.D., Yale School of Medicine, and *Permission to Feel, Unlocking the Power of Emotions to Help Our Kids, Ourselves and Our Society Thrive*, Marc Brackett, Ph.D. Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence will ground the District work in SEL, trauma informed practice, and equity.

MPS will utilize the *Strategic Operating Plan 2021: Keys to Innovation and Equity* Goal 4: Create nurturing, healthy and safe learning environments that are inclusive and engaging for all students, families and staff, *Early Minds 2022: Pathways to Readiness and Equity* Goal 2: Provide developmentally appropriate tools and resources to develop social & emotional skills and capacities that early learners need to succeed in Kindergarten and beyond drive and monitor work related to SEL, community partnerships, school climate, transitions and staff self-care and wellness.

The district will lean on existing leadership teams to Integrate professional learning related to COVID SEL into existing five-year SEL professional learning plan and current systems to ensure capacity is built across the district and build leadership. Professional learning communities. (Climate, Equity, weekly or bi-weekly MSELI/MTSS building level leadership meetings, Quarterly RULER Leadership Meetings, Bi-monthly Professional Learning Modules for district MSELI leadership team, Monthly Professional Learning Modules for SEL Interventionists, Monthly Community Leadership Project AWARE meetings, quarterly psychology, social worker and BCBA department meetings, quarterly CBITS/Bounce Back clinical team meetings and weekly coordinator support and supervision of SEL Interventionists).
The primary goal is to create environments for staff and students with health and safety guards in place. To prevent an outbreak or spread of the COVID-19 disease in Middletown Public Schools, all staff and students will have to adhere to new expectations as it relates to public health policies from the CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention). Middletown Public Schools will continue to assess conditions based on health data, conduct frequent scans of individuals before entering all buildings, develop site-based plans for COVID prevention, and create school-based teams to ensure the re-entry plan is implemented to fidelity. Consistent communication with families will be paramount to our collective success. Alignment of all departments and systems will be foundational in Middletown Public Schools in educating and training ALL around standard health and safety practices.

**These practices will include the following:**

- On-site screening for staff, students, and external visitors
- PPE for advanced protection with the spread of COVID-19
- School-based plans by site-based teams representing a variety of stakeholders
- Coordination with the local health department, including being ready to comply with requests for information to assist with contact tracing
- Implementing preventive measures in all schools
• Collaboration with the State of Connecticut, State Department of Education, and local health care experts to assess the implementation of the plan
• Providing and utilizing adequate supplies with every school environment
• Creating site-based plans based on health and environmental data
• Identification of physical areas within all schools to address asymptomatic and symptomatic cases
• Strengthening family and community partnerships through strategic mentoring programs

ON-SITE SCREENING FOR STAFF, STUDENTS, AND EXTERNAL VISITORS

• Screening for MPS Students and Families:
  • At Home Passive Screening: Parents should screen students for temperatures greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit and observe for symptoms consistent with COVID-19 PRIOR to leaving for school. Students with a temperature greater than 100.4 should stay at home and follow up with their health care provider. Parents should also follow up with their health care provider if they are experiencing other symptoms associated with COVID-19, or have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19.
  • Active Screening: Schools will screen students as they enter school consistent with state and local health guidance, which includes visual wellness checks and any necessary follow-up temperature checks with no-touch thermometers (checking to ensure temperatures below 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit). Students will be observed for illnesses including cough or respiratory distress. Students may be asked about COVID-19 symptoms within the last 24 hours and whether anyone in their home has had COVID-19 symptoms or a positive test. The school nurse is the appropriate person to receive this information in each school.
• Temperature checks for all children, teachers, and staff at the point of entry will be performed each day.

• Face masks will be required at all times.

• Students with a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees suspected of a possible COVID-19 infection will be isolated from the general population, and monitored for changes in their health status until a parent and/or guardian can provide transportation home or to a medical provider for follow up care.

• Parents with a student who has a temperature greater than 100.4 will be contacted for immediate transport to the child’s home. The student will be allowed to return to school only with a note from their healthcare provider, or with a documented negative COVID-19 test results.

• 911 Emergency Medical Services may be called for students whenever a complaint of illness, or signs and/or symptoms indicate a medical emergency and immediate medical attention is required.

• The school nurse will monitor school health status and collaborate with the local health department regarding COVID-19-like signs and symptoms in the school population with the goal of decreasing the spreading or contracting the virus through early detection and intervention.

• Communication between school nurses and principals regarding the health status of the students will be on-going.

• The principals will oversee procedures for all students to sanitize hands as they board buses.

• The principals will oversee procedures for all students to sanitize hands upon entering schools.

• The principals will oversee that upon entry to school large gatherings are avoided. Students will proceed directly to classrooms or small group designated areas.

• Screening for MPS Staff, volunteers and approved visitors:

  • Passive Screening: Staff, regular approved volunteers, and visitors are instructed to self-screen before leaving for school by checking to ensure temperatures below 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit and to observe for symptoms consistent with COVID-19. Staff and regular approved volunteers are to stay at home if they are feeling sick, have any symptoms associated with COVID-19, or have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19.

  • Active Screening: Schools will screen staff, regular approved volunteers, and
visitors as they enter school consistent with state and local health guidance, which includes visual wellness checks and any necessary follow up temperature checks with no-touch thermometers (checking to ensure temperatures below 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit). Staff and regular approved volunteers will be observed for illnesses including cough or respiratory distress. Staff may be asked by an administrator about COVID-19 symptoms within the last 24 hours and whether anyone in their home has had COVID-19 symptoms or a positive test.

- Staff, approved volunteers, and visitors with a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees are not permitted past entryway. Staff and approved volunteers will be allowed to return with a note from their healthcare provider, or with a documented negative COVID-19 test.

- 911 Emergency Medical Services may be called for staff, volunteers or approved visitors whenever a complaint of illness, or signs and/or symptoms indicate a medical emergency and immediate medical attention is required.

- The school nurse will monitor school health status and collaborate with the local health department regarding COVID-19-like signs and symptoms in the school population with the goal of decreasing the spreading or contracting the virus through early detection and intervention.

- Communication between school nurses and principals regarding the health status of the staff, volunteers, and/or approved visitors will be on-going.

- The principals will oversee taking temperature procedures for all students, teachers, and staff upon entering schools.

**PPE FOR ADVANCED PROTECTION WITH THE SPREAD OF COVID-19**

- Except in special circumstances, appropriate PPE will be required by all staff and students attending MPS in an effort to prevent infection and stop the spread of COVID-19. MPS will make every effort to ensure:

  - There is protective equipment (including hand sanitizer) for students in the classrooms and throughout the facilities.
• There is protective equipment (including PPE) for staff appropriate for each classification or duty.

• There is a plan for an ongoing supply of protective equipment.

• There is a sufficient number of no-touch thermal scan thermometers for symptom screenings.

• There is sufficient and appropriate PPE for the staff of various populations of students with disabilities (i.e., for those requiring medical procedures, toileting, lifting and mobility assistance) and as well as nursing and custodial staff.

• There is a sufficient supply of school-appropriate cleaning supplies to continuously disinfect the school site in accordance with State of Connecticut & DPH guidance.

• There are sufficient supplies that include hand sanitizers, soap, handwashing stations, tissues, no-touch trash cans, and paper towels.

**SCHOOL-BASED PLANS**

• The Superintendent of Schools has established a procedure should there be COVID-19 cases in the schools or in the community that could possibly have an impact on the schools.

  • The Superintendent, Chief of School Operations, and the district’s safety and security team have updated the Middletown Pandemic Response Plan that includes procedures for cases or cases of COVID-19. This procedure includes communication to the local health officials (Middletown Health Department) when a student, teacher, or staff member or a member of their household has tested positive for COVID-19 and has possibly exposed others at the school.

• In collaboration with school administrators, each school nurse has identified and has procedures for isolating an area of the school for a length of time based on (1) a positive COVID-19 case or cases in the school, and (2) the risk level within the school/community as determined by the Middletown Health Department.

• The Superintendent of Schools has a procedure for the closure of schools for a length of time based on (1) a positive COVID-19 case or cases and (2) the risk level within the school/community as determined by the local health officials.

• The Board of Education has granted the Superintendent the authority to take any lawful actions necessary to ensure the continuation of public education, provide for
the health and safety of students and employees, or to respond to direction from the State of Connecticut and/or the Middletown Health Department.

• The Board of Education has granted the Superintendent the authority to limit access to public school grounds and school buildings during school closures or elevated levels of transmission in the area.

• Under the supervision of the Chief of Academics, the schools are able to provide for continuity of instruction through distance learning, if necessary.

• Under the supervision of the Director of Special Education, the schools will be prepared for any special or unique needs for students with disabilities related to planned district or school wide procedures.

• Under the supervision of the Food Services Director and Chief of Administration, the schools are able to provide for continuity of meal service, if closure is necessary.

• The Chief of School Operations has authorized limited access and/or restricted access to the schools by the public.

  • The Chief of School Operations has approved restricting access to the school buildings during the school day by nonessential visitors and minimal use of school buildings outside of school hours.

  • Students, parents, caregivers, volunteers, and staff are excluded from school facilities if showing symptoms of COVID-19 or if a member of their household has tested positive for COVID-19.

• The Superintendent of Schools has developed a uniform procedure for all schools for symptomatic students.

  • Students identified through screening processes to be symptomatic while entering school will not be allowed to enter the school and their parents will be called for pick-up.

  • Students who complain of feeling ill or become symptomatic during the school day should be sent to the school nurse’s office for evaluation.

  • If the student communicates possible exposure to COVID-19 and/or presents with multiple signs and symptoms, the school nurse will notify:

    ◦ Parent/guardian via the Emergency Contact Protocol

    ◦ School leadership

    ◦ Local Health Department
• If more than one student is in an isolation area, physical distancing will be maintained.

• The school nurse will advise parents of sick students that students are not to return until they have met CDC criteria to discontinue home isolation. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html.

• Students may return to school when:
  ◊ They are, or have been, COVID-19 symptom free for 72 hours and have had no fever (99 degrees or less) for 24 hours or more without medication
  ◊ Returning students will be required to provide a note from their health care provider, or with a documented negative COVID-19 test.

• There will be no COVID-19 testing of students at school. Local testing site information will be shared with families.

• Communication between school nurses and principals regarding the health status of the staff, volunteers and/or approved visitors will be on-going.

• The school nurse will monitor the health status of the school population and collaborate with the local health department regarding COVID-19-like signs and symptoms in the school population with the goal of decreasing the risk of spreading or contracting the virus through early detection and intervention.

• If a student has been present in school and has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, the school nurse and the building principal contacts the Chief of Operations who notifies the local health officials (Middletown Health Department) immediately. In addition, the Superintendent will be notified by school personnel that a student is suspected of being sick, maintaining confidentiality in accordance with FERPA, privacy expectations, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

• The Superintendent of Schools has developed a uniform procedure for all schools for symptomatic staff and volunteers.

  • Adults who are symptomatic while entering school or become symptomatic during the school day will be sent home and advised to seek medical care.

  • School administrators and/or the school nurse will advise adults not to return until they have met CDC criteria to discontinue home isolation. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html.

  • Teachers and staff may return to school when:
    ◊ They are, or have been, COVID-19 free for 72 hours and have had no fever (99 degrees or less) for 24 hours or more without medication
• Returning staff will be required to provide a note from their health care provider, or with a documented negative COVID-19 test.

• There will be no COVID-19 testing of staff and volunteers at school. Local testing site information will be shared with staff.

• The school nurse will monitor school health status and collaborate with the local health department regarding COVID-19-like signs and symptoms in the school population with the goal of decreasing the spreading or contracting of the virus through early detection and intervention.

• Communication between school nurses and principals regarding the health status of the staff, volunteers and/or approved visitors will be on-going.

• If a staff member or volunteer has been present in school and has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, the school nurse will submit a report to the Middletown Health Department and notify the principal of the report. The building principal will notify the Chief of Operations of the report. In addition, the Superintendent will be notified by school personnel that a staff member or a volunteer is suspected of being sick, maintaining confidentiality in accordance with privacy expectations and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

• Outside visitors and groups will have very limited or no access to schools during the school day.

• Access to the buildings by visitors/parents will be extremely limited and only for specific educational purposes.

• Each school will post a “No Visitors Policy” that includes the following wording, “Visitors will not be permitted into school facilities unless scheduled to enter, or required by law, or otherwise required by a student’s individualized educational plan.”

• Each school’s Main Office will maintain a log for those visitors allowed into the building. The log will include name, contact phone number, and arrival/departure time of each individual.

• Principals and office staff will organize parent pick up / drop off of students, which will be modified at each building. The use of a face mask will be required of all parents who are picking up or dropping off students during the school day and required to enter the school office in the process. Pick up in the afternoon will be modified to ensure that parents have limited or no access to the interior of the school building. When possible un-scheduled parent pick-up procedures should occur outside the main entrance.
Contact tracing strategies and practices

Contact tracing is the process used to identify those who come into contact with people who have tested positive for many contagious diseases, including COVID-19. It is a longstanding practice around the world and is an integral function of local health departments in keeping communities safe from the spread of disease. Upon notification that a resident has tested positive for COVID-19, a local health department will call to determine close contacts to whom they may have spread the virus (close contact is defined as being within six feet for a period of at least 10 minutes). Trained professionals from the community then get in touch with those close contacts to recommend next steps, such as self-quarantining, and to provide critical education and support in risk mitigation strategies. Increasing the number and capacity of contact tracers has been a top priority of the Governor as these practices can help slow the spread of COVID-19. All school and district administrators, school safety specialists, counselors, and any other staff deemed appropriate by the school and district, should be provided information regarding the role of contact tracing in keeping school communities safe from the spread of contagious disease. Schools and districts should engage the expertise of their school nurses to educate the broader school community on the importance of contact tracing.

Contact tracing policies should:

• Be developed in consultation with the board’s local health department and with school nurses employed by the board;

• Clearly describe the school or district’s responsibilities regarding notification of its local health department, staff, families and the public.

• Identify the school or district’s role in assisting its local health department conduct contact tracing activities, including ongoing communication with the identified individual and/or their contacts.

• Ensure adequate information and training is provided to school and district staff as necessary to enable staff to carry out responsibilities assigned to them under the policy; and

• Adhere to all applicable federal and state requirements regarding privacy of educational records (e.g. FERPA).

• Designation of a staff liaison or liaisons responsible for providing notifications and carrying out other components of the board’s contact tracing policy could help ensure that notifications are carried out in a prompt and responsible manner.

• Open communication systems that allow staff, students, and families to self-report symptoms and/or suspected exposure could assist school districts provide prompt notification.
IMPLEMENTING PRECAUTIONS AS PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Through the support and collaboration with the School Health Supervisor, each school nurse will oversee hygiene (hand washing / sanitizing) training for staff in each school.

  - In collaboration with school administrators, school nurses will ensure, in accordance with CDC guidance, that hand washing/sanitizing training includes:

    ◊ The need for opportunities for students and staff to meet hand washing/sanitizing frequency guidance.
    ◊ The need for sufficient access to handwashing and sanitizer stations.
    ◊ The need for age-appropriate supervision to use hand sanitizer.

- The Middletown School Health Supervisor and school nurses will identify, develop and share health and safety protocols training materials for staff with the Chief of Operations.

- The Chief of Academics will plan in-person or online training that includes: social distancing; cleaning protocols; and hygiene practices. Principals will ensure access for all students and staff, as well as for family members who are interested.

- Training will be provided to substitutes or others who may join the school after the first day or typical calendar start.

- The Director of Special Education and Chief of Academics will designate, in addition to the school nurses, an additional one to two people in each school to assist with training as needed.

- Principals and teachers will post signage on proper handwashing techniques, including the following:

  ◊ Scrub with soap for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not accessible.
  ◊ Staff and students should dry hands thoroughly.
  ◊ Wash/sanitize hands when: arriving and leaving home; arriving at and leaving school; after playing outside; after having close contact with others; after using shared surfaces or tools; before and after using restroom; after blowing nose, coughing, and sneezing; and before and after eating and preparing foods.
• Principals and teachers will ensure that students receive ongoing education in the expectations related to all public health policies and protocols. Students will be educated about how coronavirus is spread, and how preventative actions help avoid the spread (for example, that masks keep droplets out of the air and hand hygiene keeps the virus out of one’s mouth/nose/eyes).

• Principals will assess the best approach to communicating wellness information for each age group, and plan to set aside time at the beginning of the school year, as well as scheduling frequent reminders, to review the new policies and protocols. These practices include, but are not limited to:
  ◦ Social distancing,
  ◦ Use of face coverings that completely cover the nose and mouth,
  ◦ respiratory and cough etiquette, and
  ◦ Enhanced cleaning/disinfection of surfaces.

• All school employees will assist in the expectation from the State of Connecticut that face coverings/masks are in place during the school day by all
  • The only exceptions for face coverings or masks are as follows:
    ◦ 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.
  • For students, face coverings/masks may be removed while eating, drinking, during PE, or when students are outside, and effectively practicing social distancing. Exceptions may also be necessary for certain special education students or other special populations.
  • For students who have trouble breathing or for other medical reasons, reasonable accommodations will include a face shield with a cloth drape attached across the bottom and tucked into the shirt.
  • NOTE: Face shields alone are not a sufficient alternative to the wearing of face masks, but rather both should be worn for additional protection.
  • Parents will be responsible for providing students with face coverings or masks that are comfortable and familiar for wearing throughout the school day.
  • Schools will have backup disposable masks available for students who forget them.
• Principals will establish times for “Mask Breaks” that will be provided during the school day. Breaks will occur when students can practice social distancing and/or when they are outside.

• Teachers and staff will wear masks that completely cover the nose and mouth inside the schools and will be assigned all necessary PPE as required for their role.

• For teachers and staff, face coverings/masks may be removed while teaching if the following conditions are in place:
  ◊ Enhanced social distancing, remaining static behind a physical barrier of some sort, while eating, drinking, or when outside and effectively practicing social distancing.

• Face shields worn with face masks may also be used by staff who support students with special healthcare needs (who are not able to wear masks and who may need assistance with activities of daily living, such as toileting, or eating).

• Staff working with students who are not wearing face coverings due to one of the exceptions and also cannot maintain social distancing will be provided increased protective equipment, including but not limited to medical-grade masks and disposable gowns.

• Staff members will receive guidance/training on proper use of PPE required for their role: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/using-ppe.html

• Any staff member engaged in symptom screening will be provided surgical masks, face shields, and disposable gloves. School nurses and isolation room monitors will be provided with gloves and N95 masks while working with students exhibiting signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

• Front office and food service employees will be provided with face coverings or masks and disposable gloves.

• Custodial staff will be provided equipment and PPE for cleaning and disinfecting:
  • For regular surface cleaning, gloves appropriate for all cleaning and disinfecting will be provided. Staff engaged in deep cleaning and disinfecting will be equipped with appropriate PPE for COVID-19 disinfection (disposable gown, gloves, eye protection, and mask or respirator) in addition to PPE as required by product instructions.

• Visitors and those making deliveries to the school must wear face coverings or masks that completely cover the nose and mouth.

• All school employees will assist in the expectation that physical distancing / social distancing is maintained as much as possible.

• The school administration will be prepared to assist teachers, staff, and students in
determining and maintaining social distancing between individuals to reduce the transmission of the virus per the public health guidelines at that time.

- Principals will be prepared to communicate and adjust the approach to social distancing if guidance from the CDC or DPH changes due to shifting public health data or evolving understanding of COVID-19 disease, including transmission.

- Each school will plan for the number of people that can be in all school spaces (library, cafeteria, gymnasium) based on maintaining reasonable social distancing prior to use by a classroom or group.

- Even with social distancing expectations in the classroom, school spaces, or hallways, students and staff members will wear face coverings / masks in school and on the bus.

- To the extent possible the schools will create student/teacher classroom cohorts to minimize the mixing of student groups throughout the day. Consistent teams/cohorts will minimize cross-contamination of student groups.

- Schools will have plans to minimize movement of students and staff as much as possible and reduce the amount of students and staff that move at the same time.

- Traffic patterns in hallways will be designed to promote social distancing during passing times. Strategies will include staggered passing times or one-way traffic in hallways.

- Classroom seating shall be assigned to students at all times during the day. Any alternate seating or shared seating in reading nooks, group centers, and other areas will not be allowed.

- Schools will restrict the sharing of educational materials between individuals. These materials include such items as books, manipulatives, computers, calculators, writing utensils, and art supplies. No two individuals should use the same materials in a given school day without appropriate cleaning / disinfecting in between uses.
MPS acknowledges the importance of providing measures and opportunities that support and develop the social and emotional well-being of all of our students, particularly in times of increased stress, such as a pandemic event. To that end, students will receive support and strategies that address social and emotional growth and well-being.

**These supports and strategies include:**

- A comprehensive Multi-Tiered System of SEL Support (MTSS). MTSS includes strengths-based screening of students, appropriate levels of instruction and support services, and a data collection and assessment system to inform decisions at each tier of instruction. Middletown’s MTSS is referred to as the Middletown Social Emotional Learning and Intervention (MSELI) framework.

- Collaborative integration and wrap around services amongst various mental health and support services personnel within the community and school systems; including MSELI teams, school crisis teams, school psychologists, social workers, BCBAs, pupil services, Effective School Solutions clinicians, school counselors, School Based Health Center Clinicians, Mobile Crisis, SEL interventionists, home visitors, and ministerial alliance faith based mentors, as well as various community providers to support all students support and intervention as needed.

- The “Connected, Healthy, and Learning” or CHL initiative, a grassroots initiative that evolved from UCONN’s CALM study on anxiety. Students are taught and encouraged to utilize deep breathing, visualization, and/or progressive muscle relaxation during the school day as a means of grounding themselves into the learning environment as well as reducing stress and/or anxiety.
IDENTIFICATION OF AREAS WITHIN ALL SCHOOLS TO ADDRESS ASYMPTOMATIC AND SYMPTOMATIC CASES

The following procedures will be implemented for students presenting to the nurses office with complaints, signs and/or symptoms of COVID-19:

• The student will be evaluated for signs and symptoms of infectious disease, such as COVID-19.

• The student will be provided with appropriate PPE (if they do not already have it) and isolated from the general population in a supervised area separate from the school health office if COVID-19 is suspected.

• The parent and/or guardian will be contacted for immediate pick-up and encouraged to seek medical evaluation for their child with their medical provider.

• 911 Emergency Medical Services will be activated in the event the student exhibits signs or symptoms of a medical emergency.

• A school staff member will monitor the student for any significant changes in breathing, consciousness or any signs or symptoms of a medical nature requiring emergency care. And, assist the student, if needed, to bathroom facilities.

• The school nurse will notify custodial services of the use of the designated space and the need for follow-up disinfection and cleaning.

• The school nurse will complete and submit to the Middletown Health Department the COVID-19 Report Form.

• Staff members interacting with student(s) in the isolation space or disinfecting and cleaning the space will be provided with the appropriate PPE.
The instructional core (i.e. teacher, student, and content) is an essential underpinning to the trajectory of unlocking the potential in **ALL** students. As we return to brick-and-mortar schooling, we anticipate that learning and opportunity gaps will become more prevalent during the 2020-2021 year. This is not attributed to one education or structural factor, but the conditions that the COVID-19 pandemic created. Because the shift to remote learning happened without adequate preparation or time to support a strategic transition, our planning process to create conducive learning conditions for the 2020-2021 school year must be copious. In preparation to mitigate unknown and known gaps in Middletown Public Schools, the expectation is to strengthen our trajectory of **innovation** for **equity**.

There will be families that will choose to continue distance learning despite the enhanced parameters; our schools will support the decision for a “face-to-face” or “on-line” experience for individual students. To ensure teaching and learning is not compromised, our approach will employ blended and personalized learning as the instructional delivery mechanism to create high-quality learning experiences. Our goal is to have all students on grade level or above. To reach this goal of creating blended and personalized learning models that support **innovation** and **equity**, Middletown Public Schools will:

- Meet the obligations of delivering special education services to students with disabilities to the greatest extent possible
- Prepare leaders and teachers with professional learning experiences that will meet the needs to become agile within a multi-faceted learning environment
• Ground curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices where standards are prioritized and employ blended learning methodologies to support all learners

• Ensure all learning management systems are updated so access and connectivity are not inhibiting factors to the teaching and learning experience

• Prepare leaders and teachers to augment the current instructional model to address the loss of learning, achievement gap, and promote growth that the COVID-19 slowed

• Continue to implement Middletown 2021 to advance innovation and equity within the context of the instructional core (teacher, student, and content)

• Support families who choose a remote learning experience despite current health and environmental data

• Create high-quality pathways for students that include technical skill advancement using the technology surge as a pillar for innovation

• Incorporate SEL and trauma dimensions within the academic multi-tiered system of support to accelerate learning experiences for ALL

• Foster learning experiences where students have control of their learning using path, place, and pace as core mechanism within the brick-and-mortar/remote experience

CONTINUOUS LEARNING FOR ALL

The continuity and continuous delivery of instruction will be grounded in the acceleration of ALL students. This includes enrichment experiences, curtailing the loss of learning during the pandemic, and a steadfast focus on closing the achievement gap. A core shift noted by the Council of Chief State School Officers is to prioritize key standards focused on essential skills to access content in all academic areas. The instructional model to support this level of prioritizing standards will require creativity and innovation with the integration of technology. Because the COVID-19 pandemic has created conditions that vary immensely across the continuum, learning platforms such as Google and Seesaw will be rooted in the student experience. Artificial intelligence will be a component for teachers to assist with teaching and provide necessary information to guide instructional decisions.
### CONTINUOUS LEARNING FOR ALL

#### High-Quality and Equitable Instruction

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<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>High-Quality and Equitable Instruction</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td>Aligning curriculum and instruction is foundational to advance student learning. Identifying and targeting priority learning standards by grade and content area will focus teaching, while highlighting the expected skill outcome for students.</td>
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<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td>Grounding curriculum documents across all grade levels to address priority standards will be a strategic focus to mitigate learning gaps. Moreover, the need for culturally responsive practices coupled with the integration of technology for blended learning are going to be operationalized in all learning environments to promote equity and innovation.</td>
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<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td>Preparing leaders as well as classroom teachers for an instructional delivery model that is appropriate and equitable will be underscored in every classroom. Face-to-face instruction and/or remote learning will be the learning environment for students. Leaders and teachers will launch and sustain learning environments that are inclusive for all.</td>
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<td><strong>D</strong></td>
<td>To strategically advance learning in all classrooms, teachers will have the necessary artificial intelligence and adaptive software to compliment their practices to accelerate outcomes. Providing support systems to personalizing learning and training for differentiated instruction methods will continuously refine our model despite a shift in paradigm due to health data during the academic year.</td>
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#### Learning Environments that are Student-Centered

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<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Learning Environments that are Student-Centered</strong></td>
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<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td>Students returning to school from the COVID-19 pandemic will demonstrate an array of abilities based on standards upon their re-entry in the fall. To meet the needs of all students, continuous training for leaders and teachers on best practices will be underpinned throughout the academic year.</td>
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### Continuous Learning for All

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<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>Developing student-centered environments will require flexibility with scheduling to meet state mandates regarding cohorting. High-quality teaching will be both asynchronous and synchronous, one-to-one, as well as both small group and whole group instruction using a blended approach in all content areas.</th>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Student-centered learning is grounded in equity. Thus, creating classrooms that cluster students heterogeneously despite race, gender, ability, or cognitive dexterity.</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>A primary focus to successfully implement systems and structures that are student focused is cross-functional learning. Extended collaboration among leaders and teachers will be focused on developing student-centered units, lesson plans, performance activities, and quality blended instruction that is supported through ongoing coaching and innovative professional learning.</td>
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### Diverse Assessment Mechanisms to Advance Achievement

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<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>Monitoring quality and quantity of instruction will be underscored by tracking engagement and formative/summative assessment outcomes to make instructional decisions for all students.</th>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Students will be engaged in a diagnostic process that will assess their growth to ensure learning gaps that were created by the pandemic are mitigated at an exponential rate. The ultimate goal is to have all students demonstrate the necessary growth to meet proficiency or above.</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>Leaders and teachers will engage in academic-focused meetings (in-person or virtually) to discuss progress of students on a regular basis. Assessment information will be used to guide instructional practices as well as provide feedback to families through phone calls, emails, video conferences, or shared materials within our adopted learning management systems (i.e. Seesaw or Google).</td>
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Expectations and outcome measures for students will be communicated to families by educators so structures and systems are in place for alignment and transparency to advance achievement for all.

4 Serving Students with Disabilities: Special Education and Related Service

“Students eligible for special education are general education students first. Guidance and policies related to school re-opening plans apply to all students, including students with special needs who qualify for individual education programs under IDEA.” – State Reopening Plan

Students with Disabilities will be included in all re-entry plans and will have access to intervention and recovery learning opportunities afforded to students without disabilities. Assessment will be made of each student’s individual ability to access these activities. As indicated, individualized plans based on student need, present levels of functioning, developmental levels, and student/parent input will be developed. Teams will follow SDE guidance found in Sensible Assessment Practices in 2020–21 and Beyond.

Communicate established protocols to families related to safety guidelines and structures to ensure a safe school environment. Develop individualized transition plans to assist high needs students who require additional support and instruction in order to minimize risk and maximize access to in-person instruction. Instruction may include social stories, instruction in use of PPE, desensitization to others wearing PPE and individual Behavior Intervention and Communication Plans.

Pupil Services Teams will assess the level of participation, engagement and progress during the COVID-19 closure through a review of each student’s Continuation of Learning Plan, IEP Progress Marks, Individual Education Plans (IEP) to identify critical skills and services that may have been lost during closure and adjust individual plans based on that assessment.
### CONTINUOUS LEARNING FOR ALL

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<td><strong>D</strong></td>
<td>Pupil services leadership will work with district and building leadership to ensure the IDEA provisions related to FAPE and LRE are met within the flexibilities provided by the Federal Department of Education and SDE and in accordance with established local, state and federal standards and public health strategies.</td>
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<td><strong>E</strong></td>
<td>District and building PPS leadership will work with the Chief of Operations and District Nurse Coordinator to develop procedures for the return to school of medically fragile students and students with physical or health impairments who may require accommodations and modifications as part of an IEP or 504 Plan. Decisions will be made on an individualized basis and in coordination with families and health care providers to identify additional precautions and measures needed for students with significant medical risk factors.</td>
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<td><strong>F</strong></td>
<td>School based PPS teams will work with district leadership to identify students who missed Annual Review and/or re-evaluation dates and initial referrals that were made during school closure. Teams will develop a schedule to address incomplete or overdue evaluations and meetings as soon as feasible based on data collection, evaluation administration and the ability to safely schedule at an agreeable time with the parent or guardian. The District will make a best faith effort to complete all legal timelines as soon as is practicable in order to determine eligibility for special education and related services and to develop appropriate IEPs based on eligibility and individual need. Additional school closure may impact timelines and will be re-evaluated as needed and in alignment with SDE guidance.</td>
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<td><strong>G</strong></td>
<td>Pupil Services Teams will assess students receiving post-secondary transition to identify student’s whose transition plans may have been adversely affected by Covid-19 closure and determine if additional services are required and/or to connect the student to adult services and community resources.</td>
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**CONTINUOUS LEARNING FOR ALL**

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<tr>
<th>H</th>
<th>Student Assistance, Intervention and Multi Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) teams will meet regularly to review student data, identify recovery and intervention needs and ensure timely referrals to special education under child find for students who do not respond to intervention or for whom a disability under IDEA is suspected.</th>
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<td>I</td>
<td>Within guidance and allowable flexibilities, provide protocols, professional guidance or training and appropriate PPE to staff working in close proximity with students who have specialized needs such as students with visual or hearing impairments, needs related ADL and self-care, significant behavioral challenges requiring physical intervention and/or special communication needs.</td>
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<td>J</td>
<td>Special consideration will be given to students who are unable to adhere to CDC or local health guidance. School based teams in collaboration with district leadership and health providers will consider modifications to the instructional space, use of alternative PPE, class size and scheduling that will maximize each student’s ability for in-person instruction and related services.</td>
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<td>K</td>
<td>Special consideration will be given to students whose behaviors jeopardize the safety of others. When possible, Functional Behavior Assessments will be conducted to identify interventions to address unsafe behaviors. Social stories, alternative settings, and strategies and behavioral interventions will be implemented to address critical behaviors putting others at risk except when not feasible in the event of immediate and serious Covid-19 health risk. In the event a student does not respond to interventions, the student’s team will determine if the student requires remote learning. In the event that a student is determined to require a transition to remote learning, strategies and interventions will be implemented to support a return to in-person instruction as soon as can be safely done.</td>
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<td>L</td>
<td>In collaboration with the Nurse Coordinator and health providers and families, the District will identify students with IEPs who may be at high risk or have underlying health conditions who may require remote learning, alternative learning materials or home services. For students who are unable to access in-person learning an emphasis will be placed on synchronous instructional opportunities.</td>
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Modifying school environments focused on health and safety parameters will require extensive learning as a teaching and learning organization. Through collaboration in the context of a decentralized/centralized approach, central office administration will work with school leaders to coordinate a successful re-entry based on the Connecticut State Department of Education’s re-entry plan. Decision-making in the context of planning and preparation will leverage the theory around “co-creation” where meaningful insights will lead to identifying solutions for ALL. District and school leadership will have to be systematically aligned in a cross-functional manner so implementation of the plan will be cohesive.

These actions will include:
- Creation of school schedules and cohorts with the support of central office administration
- Schools are viewed as partners and will plan accordingly based on site-based information
- Providing appropriate staffing to the meet the demands of face-to-face and on-line instruction using data metrics
- Preparing staff and school communities using support from central office to ensure health and safety parameters are implemented to fidelity
• Implementing MPS task force recommendations for adjustment of school decision-making using data metrics
• Returning athletics under the parameters of the State Department of Education and local health and safety guidelines
• Central office and schools working interdependently to accelerate student achievement and foster collaboration for alignment and coherence
• Planning and preparation to support the dimensions of whole child, whole school, and whole community

It is imperative that central office and school-based planning teams work in collaboration to adapt operational and academic norms in accordance with the Connecticut State Department of Education re-entry plan. The district realizes the uniqueness of each school site, which will require a level of “bound autonomy” for leaders to make decisions in the context of our re-entry framework. A profound thread in this process is to support school leaders with ideas around planning, translating ideas, and preparing elements that will be rooted in quality of instruction, safety for all, and health data for collaborative decision making. In consideration with state requirements, all schools will have “COVID Teams” to review components of the re-entry plan and strategically pivot when necessary. Professional development for leaders, teachers, and staff will be differentiated in collaboration with central office to identify capacity needs and leverage for improvement.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unpredictable economy that has created an environment where leadership has to be both decentralized and centralized. The Middletown Public Schools are committed to making adjustments in the best interest of staff, families, and students. In March 2020, a task force of central office administrators,
The three plans will reflect the following:

- **Green Plan (Face-to-Face and Remote Learning Experiences):** Current recommendations by the Connecticut State Department of Education have students returning to the brick-and-mortar schooling in August. There will be a cohort of families that will “opt-in” to a remote experience despite the recommendation by Governor Lamont and Education Commissioner Cardona. The “Green Plan” will implement the tenets from each domain in *The Re-Entry: Getting Back to Innovation and Equity*. Blended learning will be the preferred instructional method.

- **Yellow Plan (Hybrid Learning Experience):** In the event of COVID-19 cases increasing at a moderate level in Connecticut or Middletown, we will make a recommendation to the Middletown Board of Education to employ our “Yellow Plan.” This shift would include alternative scheduling, modified cohorts, reduced building capacity, and strengthened hybrid learning experiences (e.g. face-to-face coupled with asynchronous and synchronous instruction). Blended learning will be the preferred instructional method.

- **Red Plan (Distance Learning Experience):** In the event of COVID-19 cases reaching a level that is hazardous in Connecticut or Middletown, we will implement our distance learning strategy that will be entirely remote. Online instruction without the brick-and-mortar experience will be the preferred instructional method.

The Middletown Public Schools task force will be working throughout the 2020-2021 academic year to review “lessons learned” from our distance learning experience to enhance our remote learning strategy should COVID-19 cases increase exponentially. The task force will develop innovative approaches within the hybrid experience if health conditions suggest we move into this environment. The on-going work of the task force will be to monitor and make suggestions to improve the current re-entry plan using a sub/whole committee structure that will meet every month.
**GREEN PLAN**
**FULL IMPLEMENTATION**

Plan A:
“The Re-Entry: Getting Back to Innovation and Equity”

No Spread of Virus

100% of Face-to-Face
*Remote learning will be available for families who do not feel safe returning to the brick-and-mortar under current state recommendations

Instructional Mechanism: Blended Learning

Current health and environmental data has suggested minimal transition of the COVID-19 virus. Schools will operate under special parameters to inhibit the spread of the virus using a blended learning model for instruction. Students will have a personalized learning experience. Internet access points and technology will be provided to families who need support.

**YELLOW PLAN**
**HYBRID LEARNING EXPERIENCE**

Plan B:
Moderate increases in COVID-19 cases in Connecticut or Middletown

Moderate Spread of Virus

Alternative Schedules for A/B cohort of students (half of student population on any given day)

Instructional Mechanism: Blended Learning

Based on an increased number of COVID-19 cases, schools will operate on alternative schedules with students in A/B cohorts. Operational structures will function at a reduced ratio of 50%. Elements of the “Green Plan” and “Red Plan” will be implemented in an integrative manner. Access points and technology will be provided to families who need support.

**RED PLAN**
**DISTANCE LEARNING**

Plan C:
Exponential increases of COVID-19 cases in Connecticut or Middletown

High Spread of Virus

Requiring all students to access instruction at home

Instructional Mechanism: Distance/Remote Learning

Based the widespread numbers of COVID-19 cases, learning will take place at home with pre-determined structures to support the continuation of a high-quality learning experience for students. Access points and technology will be provided to families who need support.
In order to support a full transition back to brick-and-mortar schooling, Middletown Public Schools will develop creative solutions to support staff and students. The COVID-19 pandemic has created fiscal quandaries within local education agencies across the state of Connecticut. Moreover, it has challenged existing policies that need to be reviewed, revised, and restructured to support the new conditions that the COVID-19 pandemic created. The 2020–2021 academic year will be vastly different in the context of operational and organizational implementation, including how fiscal decisions are made because of the pandemic.

**Fiscal and policy considerations will include:**

- Purchasing to support the academic achievement, health and safety for **ALL**
- Utilization of federal and local funding to cover COVID-19 pandemic expenses
- Expanding of artificial intelligence, software, and technology infrastructure to strengthen the teaching and learning experience
- Developing policy and structural mandates in alignment with new education conditions
FISCAL & POLICY STRUCTURES

Fiscal challenges related to COVID-19 have been significant. Unexpected costs due to distance learning, professional development, cleaning, food services, protective equipment and health related supplies have changed the budget structure significantly. Financial flexibility will be necessary to adjust to the changing financial needs of the district. Governmental regulations to pay staff and continue service costs during closure such as transportation have caused repurposing of funds and restructuring of expenditures.

We have seen significant changes in the following areas and have needed to adjust spending for the following funding considerations:

• Purchasing: School districts will need to purchase items not needed in the past (e.g., personal protective equipment, desk shields, sanitizing wipes and other cleaning supplies). Collaboration with other districts, state contracts and innovative opportunities have allowed us to purchase items at a lower cost by either purchasing through an established State contract or through a cooperative purchasing consortium.

• Technology: Costs related to technology, connectivity, access and network protection have increased during the pandemic. Staff and student access to technology for distance learning and professional development have increased. Costs related to network security, student on-line safety, and wifi hotspots have increased.

• Reallocation: Our district will consider making expenditures from various accounts or over budget line items to meet unanticipated costs and to manage our spending differently than other years. The district will use carryover funds and transfers from areas that can support reduced spending to shift for future spending.

• Contracts: All contracts will be reviewed for potential savings (i.e. rebates from health spending, workers compensations, out of district costs, and transportation). Middletown participates in the federal E-rate program, which provides schools and libraries with funding support for high-speed broadband connectivity and internal connections equipment. This is not a new program, but certainly affords us financial opportunity.

• Delivery of services and product: Delivery, access, and demand for certain products (cleaning materials, face coverings, etc) have presented challenges. Closed buildings have caused return of orders, refunds and repurchasing. Competition for delivery and access to goods need to be considered to ensure products are secured for the re-entry plan.
• The City of Middletown has provided access to health and safety supplies from the Health Department and the Middletown Fire and Police Departments. Cooperation on fuel costs, energy savings, and other opportunities have been a successful partnership between the City of Middletown and the Middletown Board of Education.

• Food services: Meals have been provided to students and families since the initial COVID-19 closure. Reimbursement for these meals are significantly lower than during the regular school year. It has been imperative that we continue to feed our families and this has been a cost to the district. Efforts have been made to minimize the cost through federal and state food programs, as well as careful management of spending and use of fresh food products. A request for proposal and bid process produced flat funding and some savings to food and product costs, thus saving the district in all areas possible.

• Relief Funds: Federal Emergency Management Agency and Public Assistance. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) administers the Public Assistance program, which provides financial assistance to eligible applicants for a portion of costs incurred in responding to a declared emergency. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such an emergency declaration was made for the entire country on March 13, 2020. Under this program, FEMA will reimburse a percentage of eligible expenses that are a direct result of the declared emergency.

POLICY & STRUCTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The talented and dedicated administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals and wide ranging support staff of the Middletown Public Schools serve as the number one in-school factor impacting student learning. It is for this reason that the health, safety, well-being, professional and technological development of all our faculty and staff is of paramount consideration. In mapping the re-entry plans for the district’s nearly 4500 students, we must also consider the needs and concerns of our nearly 1500 faculty and staff who serve those students. School reopening plans and decision-making throughout the school year must provide consistency and accountability, while also providing for the flexibility to confront the unique needs of each staff member, the fluidity of the health crisis, and the broader ecosystems of which each staff member is a part at each of the District’s eleven schools. In its decision-making, regarding re-entry, the Middletown Public Schools will consider factors including but not limited to the following as it relates to talent management:
• Access to technology for all staff

• Medical considerations for themselves and family members that may have an impact on an individual’s ability to continue serving in the teaching and learning environment. The District will track and provide the mechanisms for appropriate leaves to meet these individualized needs. To this end, a staff-wide survey was distributed in early July to assist in re-entry planning.

• Social and emotional health and the child care concerns of our faculty and staff

• Access and equity considerations for all staff to ensure continuity of student learning for all students

• Clarity of expectations and accountabilities for student learning and achievement

• Compliance with all applicable Federal and State employment laws including but not limited to the American Disabilities Act (ADA) and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

• Compliance with all state executive orders and legislative acts

• Compliance with all applicable collectively bargained agreements and potential memorandums of understanding when making re-entry staffing schedules and assignment decisions

• National and regional best practices for instructional and non-instructional educators that will be crucial to student success

• Guidance from Federal, State or other educational local entities or neighboring districts which may provide insights, innovations, and recommendations for how local educational school districts are best deploying staff to design and deliver instruction and assessment of students in hybrid and virtual learning environments. These plans or recommendations may identify roles and responsibilities of school administrators, teachers, instructional assistants, educational services professionals, and student teachers that will ensure continuity of learning and leverage existing resources and personnel to maximize student success.

• Defining new Covid-19 re-entry tasks, roles, and responsibilities for administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals in service of students

• Scenario planning to support alternative learning environments