

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Hartford**

**TO:** State Board of Education  
**FROM:** Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Commissioner of Education  
**DATE:** July 14, 2020  
**SUBJECT:** Connecticut Schools Reopening

*Executive Summary*

**Introduction**

It has been 100 years since educational, public health, and governmental leaders have had to grapple with the challenges we are facing today, and have been facing for the last several months. When the effects of the pandemic required that schools across Connecticut cancel in-school classes during March, it took moments to realize that education in Connecticut would be forever changed. Connecticut has long been focused on providing all students with equity and excellence in education, and this pandemic has forced us to further focus on the inequalities that still exist within our system and to begin to address them with renewed fidelity.

We now look forward to the 2020-2021 school year, a year that will be marked with innovation and commitment. It will be our most important year as educators. And to guide our work, the CSDE has released *Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together*. This document serves as a roadmap for districts to start planning their school year.

**Background**

On March 15, 2020, Governor Lamont issued Executive Order 7C, calling for schools to cancel in-person classes to protect the State from the spread of COVID-19. That order triggered widespread changes to the State's education system and way of life. Educators transitioned critical services to remote settings; families turned their living rooms into classrooms; and students took on new lives balancing their studies with the deep personal and socioemotional impacts of this pandemic.

For the last several months, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has been working hand-in-hand with educational stakeholders, the Connecticut Department of Public Health, and the Office of the Governor to plan for schools to reopen in the fall. With public health data improving, and Connecticut being one of a handful of states poised to be in this position, we are cautiously optimistic that we can do this successfully. This work culminated with the public release of *Adapt, Advance, Achieve* on Monday, June 29<sup>th</sup>.

## Reopening Plan

This document provides LEAs with a roadmap — guardrails to operate within - while allowing them some flexibilities to create reopen plans that will most effectively serve their unique communities. It is intended to be a fluid document that will evolve based on the public health data trends as well as the understanding of the best way to mitigate spread. Some key important points about the document:

1. Before July 24, 2020, LEAs and all school operators, including but not limited to choice programs, charter schools, and endowed academies will be expected to submit a plan to the CSDE addressing the requirements outlined in the document. While the CSDE will not approve such plans, they will be retained and best practices communicated and will allow the CSDE to provide technical support for those LEAs who require it.
2. The document contains:
  - *REQUIREMENTS*, are defined as elements that the Office of the Governor, the CSDE, and/or the Connecticut State Department of Public Health have identified as necessary for the LEA to complete or comply with in order to open schools successfully in the fall.
  - *GUIDANCE*, is defined as considerations put forth by the CSDE or referenced entity rooted in best practice, experience, and research that will aid in the successful reopening of schools in the fall.
3. On June 30, 2020, the CSDE launched the *CT Learning Hub*. This is a place for universal access to curated high-quality, high-impact online learning content for math, English language arts, science, social studies, the arts, physical education and more anytime, anywhere. The CT Learning Hub is a free and interactive webpage of digital resources to support online and offline learning that will provide one more component to achieving true equity for our learners whether they are inside or outside of the classroom.
4. Within *Adapt, Advance, Achieve* exists the newly released: *Sensible Assessment Practices for 2020-2021 and beyond*. This document was designed to offer guidance to educators including general education teachers, special education teachers, interventionists, instructional specialists, and related service providers on how they can “assess” their incoming students when schools re-open without necessarily having to “test” them.

As we proceed toward the fall, we will continue to receive input from our educational partners, students, and families and will continue to work toward providing the best opportunities for our greatest resource—the students in the State of Connecticut.

## Next Steps

LEAs have two items they will be responding to the CSDE about:

1. Before July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020, LEAs will be expected to submit their fall reopening plans to the CSDE.
2. Before July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020, LEAs will be expected to complete a survey that is designed to combine SDE planning efforts with LEA efforts regarding the crucial need to estimate the fiscal implications for the reopening of schools in the fall.

From there, the CSDE will work with LEAs on an as-needed basis to ensure they have the support and tools needed to reopen in the fall.

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