



# MADISON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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February 5, 2021

Dear Board of Education Members:

As the Board of Education is aware, the administration has been receiving inquiries from families and the public as to when, if at all, Daniel Hand High School will open in full for in-person learning this school year. We wanted to provide information to the Board on the current status of Daniel Hand High School and potential next steps.

We believe that in-person learning is best and our goal is to be able to open Hand fully this school year. In my opinion at this time, it is not possible to put a timeframe or tie community COVID numbers on a timetable for this return.

## **Important Statistics as of February 1st:**

- Hand Student Enrollment: 959
- Students opting for remote learning: 241
- Cohort A in-person: 332
- Cohort B in-person: 274
- Students who attend Hand 5 Days a week: 112
- Note: these numbers change on almost a daily basis.

## **Major Concerns for full in-person:**

Contact tracing/quarantining of students and staff - having students fully in would lead to more students and potentially more staff quarantined with each case that arises. This could lead to placing the entire school on distance learning, having the opposite effect of what we are trying to accomplish. Due to assigned seating charts that attempt, when possible, to maintain appropriate social distancing, the impact to students after contact tracing has been minimal. With the all-in model, the impact of contact tracing will more than double at minimum, but could be even much greater impact the number of students in a class and the lack of distance between students.

Lunch - cafeteria and surrounding areas do not allow for adequate spacing for students to eat. There are 5 lunch waves each day. If all students are in attendance, lunch waves will range between 230-290 students per lunch wave. Currently, two students eat at each table. In the all-in model, a minimum of 8 students will sit at each table. Food service mitigation strategies allow for the safe purchase of food items. These strategies would have to be discontinued if we were all in as there would not be enough time to serve students during their lunch periods. Cold weather at this point impacts our lunch options.

Hallway- The traffic in the hallway will be doubled and could cause spread of the virus.

Classrooms - most classrooms have less than 3 feet of space between students. The use of desk shields at the high school level is problematic since students travel throughout the building to classrooms each day. With more students in the classroom, more will be identified as a close contact if there is a positive case.

High Schools do not cohort as easily as other levels due to the offerings and coursework required for graduation.

Juniors and Seniors - do not have an assigned location if they have a free period. During a free period, juniors go to either the Dining and Assembly Hall or Library Media Center, and seniors have these two options as well as the bridge as a final option. With the all-in model, the numbers in the LMC, DAH, and bridge would increase to a point that expected social distancing would not be possible.

Some of our courses that have high enrollment numbers would be impacted. For example, band, chorus, and Mandarin would not be able to be held in the same manner due to the fact that social distancing would no longer be possible. We could potentially hold these classes on a rotation with some students remote within the building; however, that would impact unassigned student spaces.

Currently, juniors are allowed to park on campus to decrease the number of students on buses. We do not have enough parking spaces in the all-in model. In this model, juniors would lose the privilege to park and would have to take the bus or get a ride from another student which could be counterproductive to our efforts.

For the reasons above, we do not have approval from the Madison Health Department at this time to open school buildings.

**Area Districts' High School Models:**

Guilford - Cohorts in two days a week, Distance learning on Wednesdays  
Old Saybrook - Full in  
Waterford - Cohorts in two days a week, distance learning on Wednesdays  
East Lyme - Cohorts in two days a week, distance learning on Wednesdays  
Old Lyme - Full in  
Westbrook - Full in  
Clinton - Cohorts in two days a week, distance learning on Wednesdays  
Haddam-Killingworth - One cohort in 3 days a week, other cohort in 2 days a week, alternating

I look forward to discussing this at Tuesday night's Board of Education meeting.

Sincerely,



Craig A. Cooke, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools