



# BACK TO SCHOOL

## Guide for Families

As we look forward to the 2020 school year, we would like to provide Solterra parents and families with tips to reinforce student safety in the classroom.

Information via:





## **Why should we send kids back to school?**

For many families, school provides more than just an education: it connects children to nutritious meals, internet access, and vital services. At school, all children have the opportunity to develop their social and behavioral skills with the help of trained professionals. This is especially true within the special education system.

## What will my child's school year look like?

COVID-19 has proven to be an ever-evolving obstacle, with cases shifting around the country as the year progresses. We have a rough idea of how coronavirus may behave in the fall, but Connecticut's State Department of Education has released guidelines for 3 specific scenarios: Low Risk, Moderate Risk, and High Risk.

### Low



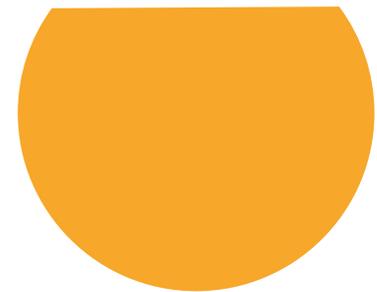
Schools operate at 100% capacity. Face coverings worn during transit and within the school building by students and staff. Students are distanced by 6 feet wherever possible.

### Moderate



Schools operate at reduced capacity with blended/remote learning. Students in need of special assistance or with no internet access prioritized for in-school learning.

### High



Schools closed with 100% remote learning. Transportation and extra-curriculars suspended.



## What actions will my child's school take?

Connecticut has launched **Adapt, Advance, Achieve**, an education plan to guide schools throughout the 2020 school year. CT schools are required to abide by new health and safety protocols that encompass every part of the school day; from buses, to playgrounds, to classrooms, to cafeterias. Each school has to develop specific measures to address:

- **Health and safety** of students and staff
- **Equal access** to in-person learning opportunities for all students
- **Health monitoring** for students and staff; cancelling classes to contain the spread of COVID-19
- **Equity, access, and support** for communities disrupted by the pandemic
- **Two-way communication** between teachers, parents, and staff
- **Mental health needs** of students and staff



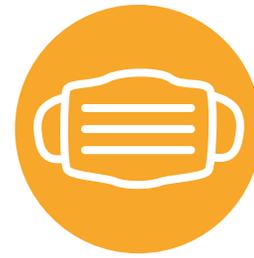
### Social Distancing

Desks will be spaced 6 feet apart and classrooms will have additional rooms to allow extra learning space where needed.



### Handwashing

Mandatory handwashing sessions will occur among students and staff. Hand sanitizer will be available throughout the building.



### Masks

Masks will be provided and required for students and staff. Our learning days will include time for mask breaks.

## Cohort Learning

The purpose of cohort learning is to minimize physical contact between classrooms. Students will spend their school days with the same small group while learning, eating, and playing. Common areas will only be used in emergencies.



## How can I prepare my child for the school year?

Just like any other school year, parents will need to equip their kids with the proper tools for learning and achievement. All of us will have to do our part to keep children safe during COVID-19. Here are some tips to help minimize the spread.



**“An important guiding principle to remember is that the more people children interact with, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread.”**

**- CDC.GOV**

- **Clean hands often.** Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap.
- **Wear a face covering.** Children 2 years and older should wear a mask in public.
- **Socially distance** your child from other children and people in public spaces.
- **Clean and disinfect** high-touch surfaces in your home on a daily basis.
- **Launder items** such as plush toys and blankets.
- **Visit the doctor** for wellness checks and immunizations. Stay up to date.

Children with autism or sensory differences may have particular difficulties adjusting to new daily routines, including mask-wearing and handwashing. You can help ease the transition by demonstrating proper personal safety and hygiene.

## HOW TO TEACH MASK-WEARING

- **Help kids get used to masks.** Let your child see you in a mask first, and then give your child time to practice mask-wearing in the home.
- **Help your child decorate their mask.** Give children markers, stickers, or other art supplies to customize their mask. This will help them own their new routine.
- **Make your masks together.** Show your child how the mask is made and let them decide which materials to use.
- **Keep it fun.** Even in a mask, kids will crave a sense of play and freedom. Keep masks on hand whenever you leave home, but also allow mask-wearing during play at home as well.

Leave colorful images and reminders around your home to familiarize your child with new habits and routines. Make handwashing schedules with direct, easy-to-follow steps and instructions.



Introduce a sense of ease and play to new routines. Help your child decorate their mask as they see fit. Embrace their questions as they adapt and learn.

## Should I let my child play with friends?

Ultimately, the decision to break or bend social distancing guidelines is up to each family. As we approach the school year, it is important to remember that we can set reasonable boundaries, even in the midst of reopening.

The only true way to eliminate the risk of spreading COVID-19 is to replace all in-person playdates with virtual hangouts or video chats. This is particularly true for households with elderly people, or with respiratory conditions. Medium-risk playdates would involve social distancing (staying 6 feet apart at all times) outdoors. Indoor areas have less ventilation and quickly spread breath particulates. Everyone involved should be taking daily precautions.

Travel plans should also be kept to a minimum as the school year approaches. At all times, remember that staying home is the best way to prevent yourself or others from becoming sick.



## Who is at highest risk?

Some adults and children are more at risk of developing life-threatening complications from COVID-19 than others. Talk with your pediatrician about what learning method is safest for you and your family this school year.



### PEOPLE AT RISK:



**The immuno-compromised**



**Children with congenital heart disease**



**The elderly**



**Children with neurological conditions**



**People with kidney disease**



**People with asthma**



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