

CONVAL REOPENING COMMUNICATION

The COVID-19 pandemic has required all of us to greatly adjust our personal and professional lives. The effect of COVID-19 is not isolated to one aspect but is all-encompassing. Nowhere is it felt more than within our school system as its impact is felt by students, parents/guardians/ school personnel and the ConVal community as a whole.

We have all seen the response to this unprecedented crisis as we had to transition from a classroom centric environment to a remote home-based environment. This was a very quick transition starting March 15th that had to take place in less than a week.

We are still faced with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and need to plan for an unknown future. We want to successfully open up the 2020-2021 school year knowing there is still much to consider.

The planning for this new school year, even though we learned a lot from our previous experience, is significantly more complex and far reaching. No longer are we confined to a few months of disruption, we must now look to long term solutions based on multiple reopening phased scenarios.

This reopening process began before the 2019-20 school year ended. Then, starting May 29th, all staff participated in a ten day evaluation of the remote learning experience and how we must address the future, knowing that it is critically important to develop flexible strategies that can be revised and adapted depending on the level of viral transmission in the school and throughout the community.

To address these scenarios, ConVal administration has developed a comprehensive and detailed approach involving over 120 individuals representing all internal and external stakeholders formed into a multi-faceted committee structure as follows:

- Steering/Guidance committee – Define guidance and direction. Assign roles and responsibilities, survey to parents/guardians and communications.
- Wellness (mental health) – Assess resources, outreach, guidelines, and protocols
- Instruction (Curriculum) – Assess learning progress and loss. Identify intervention programming.
- Facilities (cleaning and sanitizing) – Identify resources needed, procedures for first day back.
- School Operations – Additional or different staffing needs. Liability identification.
- Technology (resources and deployment) – Identify additional resources, if needed. How to deploy.
- Post-secondary – Classes of 2020 and 2021, unique needs of recent graduates, stewards for the class of 2021.

These committees have been active in their assigned responsibilities and are making significant progress.

Based on current CDC (Centers for Disease Control) guidance we are formulating our plans around a three phased approach that is scalable and can be used to guide the detailed plans that will be necessary to re-open our ConVal schools. These phases can encompass a hybrid approach (combination of remote and in school learning) and they progress from the most restrictive environments to the least restrictive.

There are also significant impacts to the school budget for addressing school re-opening. The School Board and ConVal administration have frozen the current budget to calculate where these expenses will fall, to address these extraordinary needs.

The plans under development will be based on the science community's direction on what is now known to be safe, and will be updated and modified as circumstances continue to change.

Here are the most important beliefs that are guiding the planning:

Guiding beliefs:

- Safety first – the safety of our students, faculty, and community is our highest priority.
- An in person learning environment is preferable for most students and families.
- Schools play a critical role in supporting students' academic, social, and emotional growth.
- This Re-opening Framework must support educational equity for all students.
- This Framework needs to be fluid. The ConVal Framework for Reopening acknowledges that it may be necessary to progress or regress through the Phases as public health conditions change.
- Any remote instruction will focus on providing students with learning opportunities, excellent instruction and the purposeful use of technology.
- Schools reopening is an important factor to support economic recovery because it will facilitate parents returning to work.
- The ConVal Framework for Reopening will establish precautionary measures to minimize exposure where possible using scientifically supported guidelines.
- During the pandemic we will adjust class sizes and the use of all school buildings and district facilities to support the overall health and well being of students, staff, and the community.
- Re-opening decisions and movement between phases in this Framework will be based on epidemiological data and guided by public health officials and local emergency management partners.
- This Re-opening Framework must support the personalization of learning for all students.
- The plans for reopening need to be developed so that they can be operationalized within the limitations of the current pandemic.
- The plan will include maximizing grant opportunities and federal and state funding resources.
- ConVal will use this opportunity to re-envision and implement an improved model for providing the children in our communities a robust PK-12 public education.
- Educational services will be consistent with the values and expectations of our communities, stakeholders, and the parents of our students.
- It is imperative that we retain our present student enrollment and this must be a priority.
- Stakeholders will be engaged in the process when and as appropriate through surveys and feedback opportunities.

ConVal will take this opportunity to re-envision and implement an improved model for providing the children in our communities a robust PK-12 public education with lessons learned from our COVID-19 response, and looks to its parent and community partners to guide and support this plan and its implementation.

Now more than ever, we are in this together. We are ConVal.