



Somers Elementary School

August/September 2020

A Message from the Principal:

Welcome SES students and families to the 2020 - 2021 school year! I am excited to welcome you back to our school. It is an honor for me to move from Assistant Principal to Principal of Somers Elementary School. I am privileged to work with an outstanding staff who have strived to make it a smooth transition for our students during this uncertain time. Their dedication and commitment to students is simply unmatched. I would also like to welcome Mr. Michael McDonnell, as he returns to Somers Elementary School as our new Assistant Principal. Combined, Mr. McDonnell and I have been in the Somers School District for over 25 years. Somers Elementary is our family! We are excited to work closely with you to ensure the success and overall well-being of all of our students.

The Leadership team has been working hard all summer to plan for a safe opening of school and to implement best practices to reduce the risks associated with COVID-19. Our classroom design has been modified to increase social distancing, signage has been installed throughout the building to guide students, and our schedule has been tailored to allow for more time for mask breaks and handwashing. Teachers and students will also have opportunities to access outdoor learning spaces. A stronger emphasis will be placed on social emotional learning, as we continue to implement the Second Step program in all of our K-5 classrooms. Fostering relationships and building trust within the learning environment will allow our students to thrive.

Somers Elementary School is such a special place to learn and grow. I miss the noise in the halls, the movement on the playground and hearing our students laugh. I am proud of our students and teaching staff as we continue to navigate through the Distance Learning experience. What I have learned through this process is how much I honor the professionalism, the expertise and talent our teachers bring to our school. I respect the ways in which our students continued to work hard and persevere. I appreciate the little things in life - giving a high five, seeing a smile, giving a hug or being able to laugh out loud with my SES family. What I most appreciate about Somers Elementary is how, even under circumstances we have never experienced before, we continue to grow. Whether we are learning in person or remotely at home, our goal is to continue to encourage students to build relationships and to strive for success to achieve their goals.

Partnering with families will be essential this year as we face many obstacles due to the uncertain road ahead. We appreciate your support and flexibility as you work with your children at home to practice safety protocols such as wearing a mask and washing hands. We encourage families to stay connected and informed by reading our school communications and visiting our district website for important updates and information regarding our reopening plans. Take time to enjoy what is left of the summer and I look forward to seeing you soon!

Your Partner in Education~

Melissa A. Mucci

A Message from the Assistant Principal:

It is with tremendous excitement that I greet you as the new Assistant Principal of Somers Elementary School. I am grateful to be back "home", and I look forward to assisting Mrs. Mucci in making this year the best school year possible.

Let me tell you a little about myself. I grew up in Manchester, CT, attending Manchester public schools. A couple of years after high school, I joined the United States Navy. Upon completing my four year enlistment, I attended Manchester Community College, and then UCONN, receiving a Bachelor of Science in Business. I decided to change my career path, and in 1995 I completed a Master's degree program in Education at the University of New Haven. As part of that program, I served a yearlong internship at SES. In 1996, I relocated to North Carolina to begin teaching grade three.

Three years later, I moved back to Connecticut and taught grade four in East Granby where I met my wife (an elementary teacher of course). We have a 14 year old son who is working toward his second degree black belt in karate and plays trumpet in his high school band. We also have a 12 year old daughter who loves soccer and plays the flute in her middle school band.

After teaching in East Granby for four years, I returned to SES. At SES, I continued teaching grade four and worked as a reading intervention teacher for a combination of 16 years. In 2016, I completed a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies program at UCONN. Last year I was fortunate to be chosen as the Assistant Principal of Mabelle B. Avery, and this year I return to SES again, as the Assistant Principal.

Michael McDonnell, Assistant Principal

Welcome New Staff!!!

At SES we are excited to welcome new staff members to our school and congratulate others on transfers that have happened! We feel these staff members in these positions match the needs of the Somers community and will be a positive addition to our SES family! Please join us in welcoming the following new staff members:

Lauren Atwood, Special Education Paraeducator

Gabriela Brown, 3rd Grade Long Term Substitute Teacher

Tom Eaton, SES Information Technology Specialist

Teah Garibian, Special Education Paraeducator

Rachael Geoffrion, School Nurse

Christine Hillebrecht, 4th Grade Teacher

***Therese Kowalski, Library Media Paraeducator/
Special Education Paraeducator***

Madison Provencher, Early Start PreSchool Teacher Long Term Substitute

Karen Saxton, School Nurse

Kimberly Tibbetts, 3rd Grade Teacher



First Week of School

During the first week of school, we will be utilizing a unique schedule where students will attend two days each. We will align this with the calendar that has previously been shared by the Superintendent. Therefore, please follow the below schedule for the first week of school.

Cohort A = Students with last names between **A-J**

Cohort B = Students with last names between **K-Z**

Tuesday, September 8 - **Cohort B** attends

Wednesday, September 9 - **Cohort A** attends

Thursday, September 10 - **Cohort B** attends

Friday, September 11 - **Cohort A** attends

The assignments your student will complete at home during this week will be "getting to know you" assignments that will either be delivered through SeeSaw or sent home with your students. The first week of school will be dedicated to the orientation/reorientation to school as well as building relationships among peers and staff. Students will be learning and practicing new routines. Some of those routines will include a presentation on handwashing, keeping their distance, and wearing their mask. Chromebooks/iPads will be distributed to students in grades K-5. Parents and students will receive additional information on the use of student devices within each of the learning plans (On Campus, Blended Remote and Full Remote). Devices will be sent home in grades 1-5 at the start of the school year.

The Status of Band and Chorus at SES

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused many changes as we consider our reopening plans for the 2020-2021 school year. One significant change impacts the Band and Chorus programs. Due to COVID/ CDC guidelines, beginner and advanced band as well as chorus cannot be offered at this time.

We will continue to monitor the guidelines, and reassess as the school year progresses. We understand how important these programs are to your child and to the SES community as a whole. This is something our SES family looks forward to each year. Please know that Mr. Loftus and Mrs. McCarthy will incorporate the appreciation of music into their daily instruction. We appreciate your support and flexibility during this time.



COVID Considerations Regarding the Return to School

For detailed information regarding the school's plans to return to school during this COVID crisis, please see the Somers Public Schools Reopening Plan, located on the district's website. The information below can also be found in the SES Parent/Student Handbook.

General Information:

* All parents/guardians should screen their child prior to leaving for school. If your student has a temperature over 100 degrees, has a cough, has lost the sense of taste or smell, or has other symptoms related to COVID-19, he/she should stay home from school. Please contact the school nurse to discuss your student's absence.

* All students must wear a mask on the school bus at all times. All students must wear a mask in the school building at all times. Exceptions for individuals with health concerns that may prevent him/her from safely being able to wear a mask may be made after discussion with the school nurse.

* Students may remove their masks when in their eating areas for lunch once all students have been seated.

* Proper social distancing should be maintained at all times possible. Students should work toward maintaining six-feet of social distancing or the maximum amount of space available at all times. Mask breaks will be arranged by teachers when proper social distancing can be maintained.



* Lockers will be closed during the time of COVID restrictions. Therefore, it will be beneficial for all students to have a backpack to carry their belongings. Students should be thoughtful in what they bring to school and limit what they bring to the essentials for the day.

* If a student forgets something at home and it needs to be dropped off at the school, parents/guardians will be asked to communicate through the school intercom system at the main entrance and leave the item(s) in the cart outside of the school. This will limit the need for outside individuals to come into the school building.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures:

* **The bus and car arrival and dismissal points have been modified this year.** Students will arrive and dismiss the school from different entrances depending on the mode of transportation.



Those students arriving/dismissing by bus, will enter and exit through designated areas on the gymnasium side of the school. These areas will be monitored by staff to ensure appropriate social distancing guidelines are adhered to. Buses and through traffic will utilize the left lane only on Vision Blvd. Signs will be posted along the road for guidance.

For those students arriving by car: (New Procedure)

* Parents will utilize the right lane only on Vision Blvd. to drop-off students. Once in the parking lot, make your way to the main entrance round circle (front of the school). Click on the link to view the designated route outlined in the [SES Traffic Flow Diagram](#). Please note that students being dropped off at school should arrive **NO EARLIER than 8:25am**. School staff will greet your student(s) at your vehicle beginning at **8:30am**. to ensure they get to their appropriate destination. **Please remain in your vehicle. All students**

must exit the vehicle on the passenger side, wearing a mask, when prompted by school staff. Exceptions will be made for those students who are in booster car seats and need parent assistance. We ask that you adhere to social distancing and traffic safety guidelines.

* As they enter the building students will proceed to their classrooms as lockers will not be available for use. Teachers and staff will be located throughout the building to help students reach their destination.

* All staff enter the building at 8:40 each day. If teachers are not visible on the sidewalk when you pull up, you need to park and escort your child to the front door. The entrance monitor will buzz your student in.

For those students dismissing by car: (New Procedure)

* Parents will utilize the right lane only on Vision Blvd. to pick-up students. Click on the link to view the designated route outlined in the [SES Traffic Flow Diagram](#). School staff will be in the parking lot to direct traffic flow. **Please remain in your vehicle. All students must enter the vehicle via the passenger side, when prompted by school staff.** Exceptions will be made for those students who are in booster car seats and need parent assistance. We ask that you adhere to social distancing and traffic safety guidelines.

* This school year, SES will be implementing the use of the **School Dismissal Manager Program** for dismissal. School staff is currently being trained on the use of the program. As we approach the beginning of the school year, we will be sending out a Parent Welcome Letter that outlines your role. Our goal in implementing this program is to streamline the dismissal process. Stay tuned for more information.

*Please make your own car sign when picking students up from school and place it on the front dashboard of your car for the first week of school.



What will SES look like when your student arrives ?

* Hallways will have the center taped off in **yellow** and will have **blue** walking directional arrows on the sides indicating that students and staff should stay to the right in each direction. This will help students with traffic flow and social distancing in the hallways.

* Classrooms will have all desks facing in the same direction and tape on the floors indicating where the desk should be placed to maintain the maximum amount of social distancing.



* Hand sanitizing stations will be available in all classrooms. When students enter the classroom, they will need to sanitize their hands. In addition, all classrooms are equipped with a sink for students to wash their hands.

* Sanitizing wipes will be used when your child arrives at their desks. One wipe may be used to sanitize the workspace.

* Lunch areas will be spread out to include the Cafeteria and the Gymnasium. Tables have been added to these areas to allow for adequate space to eat lunch.

* Students have recess with their class in an assigned playground zone w/sanitizing between groups.

* Wherever possible, water bottle filling stations will replace drinking fountains. Students will not be able

to drink directly from a water fountain. They will be able to fill their water bottles. Please ensure that your child's first and last name is labeled on their water bottle. If a child forgets his/her water bottle, a cup may be provided.

* Wherever possible, bathrooms will be fitted with touchless sinks. Signage will be posted reminding students to wash their hands thoroughly after using the bathroom. The number of students allowed in the bathroom at any one time will be limited to help support social distancing.

* Teacher desks, office counters, and the entrance monitor's desk will be fashioned with plexiglass as a way to provide a protective barrier for individuals who may need to be in closer contact with each other.

What will your child's classroom look like?



* Students will remain with their A/B cohort group throughout the day. All classes will be held within each homeroom.

* Each grade level will have a designated tent outside the building to provide learning opportunities and mask breaks.

* Each student will have an assigned seat in their classroom. When a student's cohort is not learning on campus, their assigned seat will remain vacant.

* Each student will have an individual supply bag labeled with their name on it. This bag will be utilized for classroom assignments. Art and Music teachers will provide specials within the classroom to maintain the integrity of each classroom cohort.

* Physical Education classes will take place outside as often as possible. When classes cannot take place outside, they will be held in the gym. Activities will be adjusted to be as individualized as possible while still maintaining the goals of working toward physical fitness, healthy lifestyles, and teamwork development.

* It will be important that each student has their own individual set of earbuds to support the use of digital instruction within the classroom.

* All students will be required to wear a mask while inside the school building. Mask breaks will be arranged by teachers when proper social distancing can be maintained. Once all students are seated in the eating areas, masks may be removed. In addition, each student will be provided with a lanyard to use throughout the school day that hooks to their mask. These lanyards will be labeled and stored at school in the student's individual supply bag.

What will lunch look like at SES?

* Upon arrival to the classroom, students will indicate their lunch preference. If they are ordering lunch from school, their choices will be recorded by their classroom teacher. Lunch choices will be limited to what is appropriate for a bag lunch. Students will have the option of which drink they would like to select (white/chocolate milk or water), but the main meal will be consistent for all students. Please label your child's lunch box with their first and last name.

* Bag lunches will be delivered to the appropriate eating space for each individual student (cafeteria/gymnasium). Each student will receive a lunch labeled with their name on it. Drinks will be distributed.

* Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to utilize the online meal payment system [My Payments Plus](#) to prepay for all lunch expenses. These accounts can be filled with a credit/debit card online or with a check brought to the main office. It will be difficult to take cash on a daily basis. If cash is necessary, please place it in a ziplock bag labeled with the student's name.



* Classes will be assigned a specific area for lunch: Cafeteria or Gymnasium. This area will remain consistent during the time of COVID restrictions. These spaces will be sanitized before and after each wave.

Assemblies and Large Gatherings:

* Assemblies and large gatherings will need to be reconsidered and adjusted to meet the requirements set out in the guidance provided by the State of Connecticut. At this time we will not be holding in-person monthly assemblies. Character trait awards will be presented virtually. More information will be provided as we move through the first month of school.

SES Virtual Meet and Greet

* Traditionally, SES's meet and greet occurred before the first day of school. This year, families will have the opportunity to view teacher welcome videos in an effort to help them gain some familiarity with the SES staff. In addition to meeting your teacher, we are creating a SES Welcome Back Video for families and students to view prior to the start of school. This video will include a tour of SES. Further information will be provided before the start of school.

Supplies and General Information



* Supply lists were shared with families in July. Families can access the link here: [SES Supply List](#). Please review the supply list and make note of the essential items students need to come to school with. There is no need to purchase additional supplies for your child as they will receive an individual supply bag with supplies on the first day. These bags will remain at school each day. It is important to remember that **every student must come to school with a mask**, or they will not be permitted entry into the school building.

* In the event that the school district moves to a Full Remote Model, your child's teacher will provide them with classroom manipulatives and related materials for home use.

Digital Learning at SES

* Seesaw is a digital platform that K-5 teachers will utilize to communicate, teach, and facilitate learning. Seesaw may be used for direct classroom instruction or during remote learning. Students are able to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways using the creative tools within the program (photos, videos, drawings, text, PDFs, and links). In addition, Seesaw provides parents a glimpse into their child's learning and an additional outlet for home school communication. Click on this [parent link](#) to view a SeeSaw informational tutorial.



For all live streaming as well as small and large group off campus learning, we will be using ZOOM.

What does each Learning Plan look like ?

Somers Public Schools will begin the 2020-2021 school year with the **Blended Remote Learning Plan**.

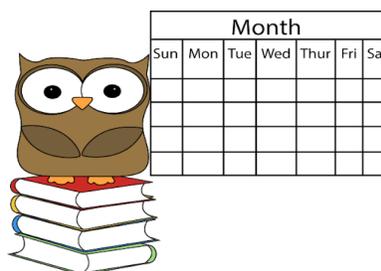
Full On Campus/In-Person Learning - This plan allows all students to return to SES five days per week for in-person instruction. SES will continue to adhere to safety protocols that are in place to maximize social distancing in classrooms. SES students who have opted out of in-person instruction will log into live lessons as indicated on the daily schedule provided by their teacher. In addition, students who have opted out will be given independent work to complete through SeeSaw. Students who have opted out will be notified of the date/time for school device pick-up.

Blended Remote Learning Plan - This plan breaks the student population into two groups: **Cohort A = Last Names A-J** and **Cohort B = Last Names K-Z**. Cohorts will attend school based on the [calendar attached here](#). When at school, students will be in their classroom and receive specific direction for their assignments to be completed on their at-home school day. They may take home assignments and or receive lessons through the use of SeeSaw (Grades K-5). It is possible that live-streaming into the classroom at a pre-scheduled time will be necessary. Grade level teachers will provide families with a schedule of times and lesson topics in advance. SES students who have opted out of in-person instruction will log into live lessons as indicated on the daily schedule provided by their teacher. In addition, students will be given independent work to complete through SeeSaw. Students who have opted out will be notified of the date/time for school device pick-up.

Full Remote Learning Plan - In this plan, all students will complete their learning at home. An AM schedule will be followed for live, interactive learning activities with peers, as well as independent assignments. The independent assignments will be delivered through SeeSaw. The PM schedule will allow the opportunity for academic support hours. Grade level teachers will provide families with a schedule of times and lesson topics in advance. Students who have opted out of in-person learning will shift to follow the full remote learning schedule for the whole school. Students who have opted out will be notified of the date/time for school device pick-up.

Important Dates to Remember!!!

Mark your calendars!!! Here are the upcoming important dates to remember for the months of September and October!!! Please contact the school if you have any questions.



Monday, September 7, 2020
Tuesday, September 8, 2020
Wednesday, September 9, 2020
Wednesday, September 30, 2020
Monday, October 12, 2020
Wednesday, October 21, 2020

No School - Labor Day
First Day of School for Cohort B
First Day of School for Cohort A
Half Day Schedule-Professional Development- **CohortB**
No School - Columbus Day
Half Day Schedule-Professional Development- **CohortA**

SES School Hours

SES School Hours

Regular School Hours

Grades K - 5
8:40 - 3:10

AM Preschool
8:40 - 11:30

PM Preschool
12:30 - 3:10

**Smart Start "Full Day"
Preschool follows the
regular school hours.**

Half Days

Grades K - 5
8:40 - 12:00 noon

AM Preschool
8:40-10:30

PM Preschool
10:30-12:00

**NO LUNCHES SERVED ON
scheduled 1/2 days of school**

2 Hour Delay

Grades K - 5
10:40 - 3:10

NO AM Preschool
PM Preschool: 12:30 - 3:10

*Students being driven to school may
arrive no earlier than 10:20 am
Lunches ARE served on delay days*

Early Release Due to Inclement Weather

Grades K-5 released at 12:00

*AM Preschool released at 10:30
NO PM Preschool*

**LUNCHES ARE SERVED
on early release days.**

PTO Happenings

The Somers Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) consists of parents and teachers working together to support and enrich the experiences of all students. The objective of the PTO is to provide schools within Somers Public Schools with funds, programs, resources, and services that will maximize the educational experience of every child while providing benefit to the school.

Look for more information regarding the PTO in the upcoming school newsletters.

