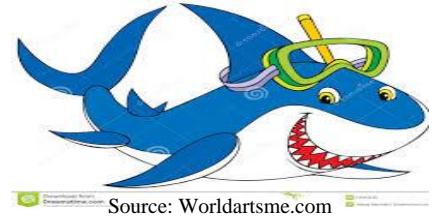


Roger Sherman Elementary School

250 Fern Street

Fairfield, CT 06824

Phone (203) 255-8330



Connecticut School of Distinction (2019-2021)

Dr. Ian M. Banner, Principal

The more flexible we become in our thinking and being, the more we open ourselves to self-awareness and growth.

– James Van Praagh

For: December 2020

Dear Parents and Families:

I hope that you all enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving break and that it also provided you with a little rest and renewed energy.

As we embark upon the coming weeks, I hope that we can capture the excitement and spirit that the winter period typically brings and that we can all, as Maya Angelou so eloquently offered, “Try to be a rainbow in someone’s cloud.”

As we have moved deeper into this school year, we continually learn how to operate under new and unfamiliar health procedures and how to comply with the law and health expectations and employ mitigating practices to guard against Covid-19. Below are a few important notes on some of these procedures and expectations that continue to evolve.

The Expectations Around Covid-19 Testing and Absences

Please note that if students have or are being tested for Covid-19 and are awaiting results, that they cannot come to school.

In the event that an individual—staff or student—tests positive for Covid-19 or have to quarantine due to exposure to someone who has Covid-19, there will a number of messages communicated to families that come primarily from the district. We are not permitted to communicate that an individual is quarantining. However, in keeping with past practice and regardless of Covid, if we become aware that a staff member is going to be absent for any reason that will extend over a longer period of time (i.e. a week or more), we always communicate this to the families whose children are intimately connected to that staff member. And in the same way, we also inform relevant staff members of children’s absences that also extend beyond more than a few days.

Additionally, students or staff members who either test positive or are in direct contact with anyone that tests positive for Covid-19 will be contacted by Fairfield’s Health Department with directions on what to do next. The entire school community will be sent a letter by the Superintendent that details what happened. To ensure we comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the need to preserve confidentiality and privacy, this correspondence will not disclose any specific details, such as names or case

information. We certainly understand that this can be frustrating, and we greatly appreciate everyone's understanding and sensitivity to the law and other people's private medical information.

Please be mindful that we are required to follow State of CT DPH guidelines regarding quarantining, and while the CDC has recently stated that they're considering reducing the number of days for quarantining, we will only do so if CT adopts this practice.

Livestreaming is Only for Quarantining Students

Prior to the Thanksgiving break (11/13), I sent a district communication (Sherman FPS Remote Expectations to Parents) that included advisory on traveling over the break, which also included on the first page a section entitled *In-Person Learning*. This noted that "students who are in quarantine will be able to join their current elementary class for the in-person of the day beginning on November 30." This referred to a new provision of livestreaming (or remote-synchronous instruction).

To be clear, this provision is *only* for students who are in an extended absence (quarantining) because they came into direct contact with a known positive case, have been tested for Covid-19 and are awaiting results or have travelled out of state. However, livestreaming is not for students who are staying home for non-quarantining reasons.

With that being said, we acknowledge that there are at times gray areas with regards to who should be quarantining and therefore to whom livestreaming should be available, and we want to be consistent with it being provided for quarantining individuals. As cases arise, each situation will be carefully considered and reviewed so we can remain true to this expectation.

To date, we feel that the decisions many of you have made to err on the side of caution when noticing that your child is exhibiting symptoms that are associated with Covid-19 have likely helped our school mitigate this virus being spread to others within the building. We also appreciate the times many of you have shared that your child came into contact with someone suspected of having Covid-19 and opted to have them remain at home, and we want to encourage you to continue doing so. We want to ensure that we continue to provide conditions that we hope support and foster an opportunity for you to openly and honestly share such concerns and suspicions and help us all feel and stay as safe and as healthy as possible. I feel that working together like this has helped Sherman be an infrequent attendee on the Superintendent's daily Covid Updates, and we'd like to keep it that way so we can continue to enjoy being together in school each day.

Patience with Livestreaming

I will share with you that many of our staff were incredibly nervous about livestreaming for the first time yesterday (11/30). A staff like Sherman prides itself on doing its absolute best for children and families at all times and understandably when faced with such a new and unfamiliar practice as livestreaming, trepidation is a normal reaction. However, and in true Sherman fashion, those who livestreamed did a fabulous job. I also want to recognize and honor the incredibly insightful and meticulous work of Mrs. Goldberg and her Library Media Specialist colleagues at other schools across the district whose efforts supported the teachers and enabled our inaugural efforts to go as smoothly as one would hope when doing this for the first time. Being able to simultaneously instruct via two completely different modes—in-person and virtually—provides an added layer of challenge that will take time for us to establish greater comfort and competence in this practice, and so we ask for your patience.

If your child is quarantining and therefore livestreaming and experiences access issues during the times they are scheduled to be online, please reach out to our office and not to the classroom teacher. They likely won't see your communication in time to intervene and we want the teacher to focus on instruction with students and not troubleshooting. Please also be mindful that the expectation when livestreaming is that your child be allowed to independently process the information provided by their teacher and then take the necessary steps as independently as possible. This is consistent with their expectations when in-person in the classroom because this is what we know promotes ownership of their work and increases their capacity to think (make sense of their task and act accordingly).

Students Arriving Early

As a reminder, the building opens for the AM cohort students at 8:45am. Staff members are *not* contractually available to supervise children before 8:45am, which is the reason that students are not permitted to enter the building before then. Therefore, please do not drop children off and leave them unsupervised before 8:45am. Also, the building opens for the PM cohort students at 12:45 pm and staff begin supervising them at that time.

Please also keep a close eye on our children before and after school to ensure that they continue to distance and wear masks. These are non-negotiable for all of us when on Sherman's campus and should be wherever we are.

While this is important throughout the entire school year, it is particularly imperative with the dangerously low temperatures we experience during the colder months. As such, we greatly appreciate your cooperation in helping to keep all of our students safe.

Important Links for this Year

The approved district **Student Calendar 2020-21** here (updated and approved on 10/13/20):

<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1602853182/fairfieldschoolsorg/bqho6qvx8rnc98i5jdlq/2020-2021FPSSTUDENTCalendarA-FREVISED10-13.pdf>

The approved district **A-F Elementary Calendar 2020-2021** here (updated and approved on 10/13/20):

<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1602853182/fairfieldschoolsorg/bqho6qvx8rnc98i5jdlq/2020-2021FPSSTUDENTCalendarA-FREVISED10-13.pdf>

Sherman's Student Handbook:

<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1581456604/fairfieldschoolsorg/y3hcfv7tudxid7ttl9b/ShermanHandbook2020asofFeb11.pdf>

Please note that while this is the 2019-2020 handbook, much of it is still directly applicable to this unique school year despite operating under different conditions. If you have questions, please feel free to forward them.

Your Feedback

Let me know what questions you have on these and any other topics, as well as how we're doing. While the staff and I are very busy in the educating of our youngsters (your children), an important and essential element of doing that effectively is having an open and on-going dialogue with you.

As always, please continue to reach out with questions and provide feedback, and remember to *Be Strong, Be Smart, Be Kind*.

#Shermanstrong!

Yours truly,

Dr. Ian M. Banner

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Follow us on Twitter: @rogershermanllc