



Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan

The Five Days/Week In-Person Instructional Model

June 8, 2021

Stonington Public Schools

We Believe in You



Introduction and Rationale

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds (ARP-ESSER) flow from the United States Department of Education through the State of Connecticut to local school districts.

This infusion of funding is to address:

- disruptions in student learning
- interpersonal interactions
- social-emotional well-being (students/staff)



Introduction and Rationale

The Connecticut State Department of Education priorities for the ARP ESSER funding include five key areas of focus:

- Learning Acceleration, Academic Renewal, & Student Enrichment
- Family & Community Connections
- Social, Emotional, and Mental Health of Students/Staff
- Strategic Use of Technology, Staff Development, and the Digital Divide
- Building Safe and Healthy Schools



Legal Requirements

Develop A Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan for public comment by June 23, 2021.

The Plan must consider the following areas:

- Health and Safety Strategies
- Continuity of Services
- Public Comment
- Periodic Review Process
- Understandable and Uniform Format



Legal Requirements

Develop A Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan for public comment by June 23, 2021.

Stonington Public Schools Plan will:

- Be a full in person return with 5 days/week of school
- Remain dynamic in nature based upon students' needs
- Be submitted in August with the ARP application
- Continually be available on the district website



Health and Safety Strategies

Policies: In August of 2020 new policies were adopted by the Board of Education.

- Personnel-Certified/Non-Certified: 4118.237/4218.237

[Face Masks/Coverings](#)

- Students: 5141.8 [Face Masks/Coverings](#)

These policies will remain in place pending further direction from the Connecticut Department of Public Health, Connecticut State Department of Education and Ledge Light Health District.



Health and Safety Strategies

Mitigation Strategy: Universal and correct wearing of masks

SPS Implementation:

- Masks will continue to be required for students and adults in the buildings and on buses for the 2021-22 school year. Signage in buildings will remain.
- Exceptions will be made for physician verified medical conditions.
- Students will be permitted to remove masks while eating, drinking, outdoors when distancing may be maintained, recess and breaks.
- Students will take the Safe Schools training on mitigation measures again next year.



Health and Safety Strategies

Mitigation Strategy: Physical Distancing

SPS Implementation:

- Social distancing will be employed to the greatest extent possible in classroom settings, non-classroom settings and during the transition times throughout the school day.
- Social distancing will be practiced to the extent possible on buses.
- Floor markers installed in common areas and classrooms specific to social distancing will remain in place.



Health and Safety Strategies

Mitigation Strategy: Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

SPS Implementation:

Frequent hand washing practices will be in place and hand-sanitizer will be available throughout the buildings

Students and staff will employ “respiratory etiquette” and cover their nose/mouth when coughing or sneezing, disposing of tissues, hand washing/sanitizing.



Health and Safety Strategies

Mitigation Strategy: Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities including Ventilation

SPS Implementation:

Ventilation is maximized in each building to provide optimum air circulation/exchange

Upgraded cleaning practices and protocols will be maintained



Health and Safety Strategies

Mitigation Strategy: Cohorting (as practical)

SPS Implementation:

Students at the elementary and middle school level may continue to be grouped by teacher or class with limited mixing among cohorts. (Response to Intervention services, Social Emotional Learning supports, etc.)



Health and Safety Strategies

Mitigation Strategy: Contact tracing, isolation, quarantine, in collaboration with the State and local health departments.

SPS Implementation:

All district administrators trained by Ledge Light Health District in contact tracing. The district also followed the guidance below:

[Addendum 5 of the CSDE Interim Guidance for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios in Connecticut School Districts](#)

[Decision Tree](#) for isolation and quarantine determinations.



Health and Safety Strategies

Mitigation Strategy: Diagnostic Screening and Testing

SPS Implementation:

Stonington Public Schools has partnered with Ledge Light Health District to provide two days of COVID-19 on site testing at Stonington High School

The district published all Ledge Light testing sites on the district webpage



Health and Safety Strategies

Mitigation Strategy: Efforts to Provide Vaccinations to educators, other staff, and eligible students.

SPS Implementation:

- On site vaccination clinics at Stonington High School
 - Ledge Light Health District to provided vaccines for adults
 - Nutmeg Pharmacy to provide vaccines to students ages 16-18 years old



Health and Safety Strategies

Mitigation Strategy: Efforts to Provide Vaccinations to educators, other staff, and eligible students.

SPS Implementation Cont'd.:

- Staff secured vaccinations through Ledge Light's portal and other local venues.
- Stonington Public Schools willing to collaborate with Ledge Light and Nutmeg Pharmacy to support future onsite vaccination opportunities.



Continuity of Services

Mitigation strategy: Appropriate Accommodations for Children with Disabilities with Respect to Health and Safety Policies

SPS Implementation:

Compliance with all federal and state mandates/statutes

Receive feedback from case managers on the need for supplemental health/safety measures

Adjust plans as need to accommodate students with disabilities based upon feedback from case managers, families, and support staff



Continuity of Services

Summer learning

- Kindergarten readiness sessions
- Supports for returning “fully remote learners”
- Summer Learning Academies for students K-8
- Accelerated credit program for “9th Grade Counts”
- Credit Recovery for high school students



Continuity of Services

Accelerate Learning: Resetting Relationships with Learning

- **Resetting Confidence**
 - Supporting Executive Functioning, Opportunities to Respond, Personalized Learning Targets, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Talk Moves
- **Advancement of Learning**
 - Prioritizing the standards
 - Triaging/Planning for each unit of study
 - Additional research-based instructional practices



Continuity of Services

Accelerate Learning: Resetting Relationships with Learning

- Unfinished Learning
 - Formative assessments, flexible groupings, data-driven decisions, differentiated instruction for all students
- Relevancy
 - Connectedness, leveraging frame of reference, meaningful lessons to the students



Continuity of Services

Accelerate Learning: Resetting Relationships with Learning

- Active Cycles of Learning
 - Optimum pacing, project-based assessments
- Continue staff development with EASTCONN (Student Engagement) and Hill Literacy (Foundational Reading Skills)
- [Funding Priorities](#) and [Academic and SEL Supports](#) to address the needs of the “whole child”.



Mechanisms for Public Comment

Opportunities for public feedback:

- Via email to publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org
- District Family Advisory Council on Tuesday, 6/8/21, District Office, 4 PM (in person)
- Board of Education Meeting, Thursday, 6/10/21, District Office, 7 PM (in person)



Mechanisms for Public Comment

Opportunities for public feedback:

- Board of Education Advisory Council on Return to School (BEARS), Wednesday, 6/16/21, District Office, 6PM (in person)
- District Family Focus Group (Key topic areas specific to Students with Disabilities/Title I) Wednesday, 6/16/21 District Office, 6 PM (in person) as part of BEARS agenda



Mechanisms for Staff Comments

Staff feedback opportunities

Administrators: June 9, 2021, District Office, 9:30 AM (in person)

Teachers/Certificated: June 10-18, 2021

Classified: (Nurses, Paraeducators, Secretaries, Maintenance/custodial): June 10-18, 2021

Other Staff: June 10-18, 2021



Mechanisms for Staff Comments

Student Feedback

Stonington High School-June 10-11, 2021

Stonington Middle School-June 11 & 14, 2021

Community Organizations Feedback-June 10-18, 2021



Periodic Review

- Safe Return to In-Person Learning and Continuity of Services Plan must be reviewed and revised as appropriate, at least every six months.
- Plans will change based upon data and needs of students.
- Public comment at publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org to be solicited each revision/reporting period and used for planning purposes
- Review/revision dates begin June 23, 2021 and will end by September 30, 2023.



Covid and teacher union

2 messages

Thomas Gram <tomegram@gmail.com>
To: publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org

Fri, May 28, 2021 at 10:22 AM

Too whom it concerns

The school district has for a year played politics with our kids education and tax payer funds. The most obvious example is after denying our kids a real education for a year: on the day of state testing after informing the school our child had a low grade fever while getting him COVID tested school calls requesting he come in and take test. Follow the money

Our school system should trim the budget get rid of excess administration and rewamp for the new century not take more dollars for same failing system

Sent from my iPhone

Comments, Public <publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org>
To: Gordon Lord <gordon.lord@stoningtonschools.org>, Frank Todisco <ftodisco@stoningtonschools.org>, Van Riley <vriley@stoningtonschools.org>

Tue, Jun 1, 2021 at 8:04 AM

Public comments below
[Quoted text hidden]

Buses for magnet school

2 messages

Kate Nicholson <knicholson3535@comcast.net>
To: publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org

Fri, May 28, 2021 at 11:05 AM

There are several families that have been impacted by the lack of bus routes that were cut due to covid. The few locations that were implemented as drop off & pickup sites are not conducive to families. Parents are required to leave work to get their children.

For the entire year families have everyday been picking up their children at MSMHS.

For example in years past, the Marine Science Magnet HS bus routes that have been in place dropped the children off at the seaport so they could attend crew practice for SHS. The children have been without this for a year. Thus getting children there has become another burden on families.

Sent from my iPhone

Comments, Public <publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org>

Tue, Jun 1, 2021 at 8:05 AM

To: Gordon Lord <gordon.lord@stoningtonschools.org>, Van Riley <vriley@stoningtonschools.org>, Frank Todisco <ftodisco@stoningtonschools.org>

see below

[Quoted text hidden]

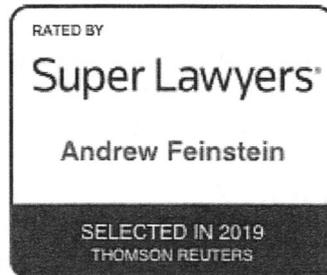
Comments on ARP Expenditure

3 messages

Andrew Feinstein <feinsteinandrew1950@gmail.com>
To: publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org
Cc: "Riley, Van" <vriley@stoningtonschools.org>

Fri, May 28, 2021 at 1:52 PM

Please see attached.



Attorney Andrew Feinstein
Feinstein Education Law Group
Office: 860-969-0700 Direct Ext. 100
Fax: 860-969-0701 Cell: 860-912-6076
Mail 86 Denison Avenue, Mystic, Connecticut 06355

WEBSITE

The information contained in this E-mail transmission is confidential and may be attorney-client privileged or protected work product under applicable law. The information is intended only for the person addressed above. If you are not the intended recipient, or an employee or agent responsible for delivery of the message to the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that you have received this transmission in error. Any review, disclosure, dissemination, copying or taking of any action in reliance upon the information contained in this transmission is forbidden by the sender and may be in violation of the law. If you have received this transmission in error, please call us at 860-969-0700 to notify us of the error.

 **Statement to Board June 1.docx**
19K

Andrew Feinstein <feinsteinandrew1950@gmail.com>
To: publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org

Fri, May 28, 2021 at 1:55 PM

My home address is 121 Latimer Point Road

[Quoted text hidden]

[Quoted text hidden]

Comments, Public <publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org>
To: Gordon Lord <gordon.lord@stoningtonschools.org>

Tue, Jun 1, 2021 at 8:05 AM

public comments

[Quoted text hidden]

 **Statement to Board June 1.docx**
19K

Statement of Andrew A. Feinstein
To Board of Education Advisory Council on Return to School
Stonington Board of Education
June 1, 2021

Members of the Council,

I am a resident of Stonington, the parent of a rising sixth grader in Stonington public schools, as well as a practicing special education lawyer representing students with disabilities throughout the state and country, and an advocate both nationally and in the state around issues of education, particularly for disadvantaged students.

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) requires local education authorities, in this case the Stonington Board of Education, to

engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders, including, but not limited to:

- i. students;
- ii. families;
- iii. school and district administrators (including special education administrators); and
- iv. teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions.

The LEA must also engage in meaningful consultation with each of the following to the extent present in or served by the LEA:

- i. Tribes;
- ii. civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations); and
- iii. stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students.

See, State Plan for the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, United States Department of Education, April 21, 2021, at pages 13-14. Permitting public comment at an Advisory Committee meeting falls appallingly short of the requirement for stakeholder participation.

While usually not the model for anything, the State Department of Education has, in this case, held two public Zoom fora, has consulted with numerous interest groups, and has solicited written comments broadly in discharging its obligation to engage in meaningful stakeholder involvement in drafting the state plan for the expenditure of ARP funds. Stonington needs to do at least that much in expending the \$2,584,931 it has been allocated under ARP.

Here is what I recommend. The Superintendent, in conjunction with the Board, should schedule one or more Zoom sessions and invite all students, parents, Stonington educators and other employees, and representatives of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students to participate in the session. There should also be the option to file written comments. The invitation letter should set out the parameters and limitations on the expenditure of the funds. The session should allow for interchange of ideas and proposals.

Further, the Superintendent should meet with representatives of teachers, parents, students, students with disabilities, paraprofessionals, administrators, as well as with community organizations to discuss various expenditure models.

Only after this gathering of stakeholder views should a proposal be forthcoming. The proposal sent out by the Board last week is premature and needs to be permanently tabled.

Given that, I am somewhat reluctant to express my detailed views on Stonington's ARP expenditure plan. I, together with dozens of other stakeholders, whether as parents, educators, or advocates, should express our views in the form described above. Suffice it to say that I strongly oppose spending 54% of Stonington's ARP money on bricks and mortar projects. The fundamental purpose of the money was to recover for the learning loss and social and emotional

damage occasioned by COVID-19. Stonington has many students who suffered substantial loss, including students with disabilities and students in poverty. It is to those students that the money needs to be directed. Indeed, a fair chunk of the money needs to be dedicated to providing compensatory services to students with disabilities who failed to make meaningful progress during the pandemic.

Further, although the ARP money must be obligated by September 30, 2024, it can be spent in ways that will have an impact far beyond that date. The way to do that is to provide Stonington's extraordinary educators with the training they need to meet the learning acceleration and social emotional demands of the next decade. Every teacher, every administrator, every paraprofessional should know how to embed restorative justice and collaborative problem solving into the school day. Every teacher should understand how to implement a learning acceleration model to incorporate missed fundamentals into a growth education model.

Further, we know that abstract book learning is aversive to many students, particularly male teens. Stonington should use some of the ARP money to create a hands-on mentorship and apprenticeship program within the Middle School and High School. While the Common Core-based curriculum works well for some students, it makes school drudgery for others. And, society needs carpenters, plumbers, electricians and mechanics, as well as lawyers, doctors, and teachers.

The Stonington Board of Education has a great deal of work to do in planning for the use of ESSER and ARP funds. I urge you to do it right.

Fwd: SHS lighting

2 messages

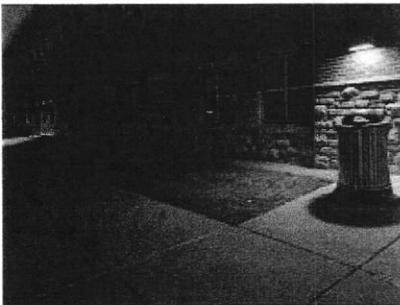
Norcross, Jennifer <jnorcross@stoningtonschools.org>
To: publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org

Mon, May 31, 2021 at 12:30 PM

Dr. Riley and Members of the Board,

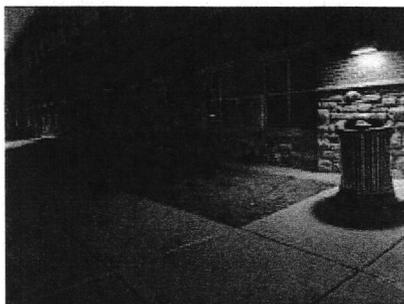
I'm so glad to hear about the federal funds that SPS will receive from the American Recovery Plan. I definitely agree with using some of the funds intended to improve infrastructure on the SHS HVAC system. As a teacher in the building, trust me, it's necessary! I'd like to mention one other area for consideration for some of these funds. Two of the lamp posts in the staff parking lot along Spellman Drive have come down in recent years and have not been replaced. Besides that, there is very little lighting on that side of the building as compared to the front of the building (parallel to South Broad Street). The lot along Spellman Drive is utilized at night for those involved in Adult Education programs and, especially, because of sports. Athletes and coaches use the lot when they have practices, and spectators from SHS and other schools use it when there are games on Palmer Field or in Bears Gym. Not only does the lack of lighting make SHS seem less than welcoming, it's unsafe, especially during the winter months. I have included a few photos to illustrate. I hope the lighting can be improved sometime soon to the benefit and safety of all who visit SHS.

Thank you,
Jennifer Norcross
Pawcatuck resident & SHS teacher

3 attachments**IMG_0145.JPG**
79K**IMG_0146.JPG**
83K**IMG_0147.JPG**
88K

see below
[Quoted text hidden]

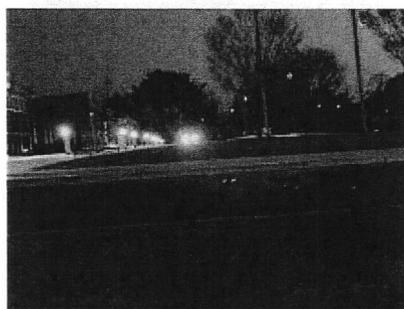
3 attachments



IMG_0145.JPG
79K



IMG_0146.JPG
83K



IMG_0147.JPG
88K



Proposal for ARP funding

3 messages

Madame Canty <madamecanty@gmail.com>

Mon, May 31, 2021 at 9:47 PM

To: publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org

Cc: ftodisco@stoningtonschools.org, jmorehouse@stoningtonschools.org, Alisa Morrison <amorrison@stoningtonschools.org>, gordon.lord@stoningtonschools.org, cesposito@stoningtonschools.org, heidi.simmons@stoningtonschools.org, frajab@stoningtonschools.org

Dear Esteemed Stonington Board of Education members:

My many thanks go out to you all for the extremely high demands that have been made of you in this very unusual year. I believe we all in the community are now in agreement as to the importance and viability of returning students to full-time in-person learning; that at least is one struggle that is behind us.

More immediately, we find ourselves, nationwide, with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve teaching and learning in our schools thanks to Federal money via the American Recovery Act. I ask the board to look closely at the intended purposes of this money before approving any proposals set forth by the superintendent.

As so many parents and community members have spoken of throughout this pandemic: our young people are suffering. Disproportionately our low-income students are suffering. ARP money is not separate from title 1 in intent, it is very much intended as a supplement to title 1 funds. ARP money is intended to address learning loss suffered by students during the pandemic. I ask you to look closely at the intended purposes of this funding and to use it appropriately to address change in our district that will have the biggest impact, in both the short and long term for our students and thus our community. A great source of guidance is a recent future-ed article from Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy which asks academics and experts in the field of education policy to share their thoughts on how schools should allocate this money. I encourage you to look at the ideas put forward by these experts as we may never again in our lifetimes have another opportunity to enact real, lasting improvements to the education systems in our town. The ARP money should be spent targeting tech equity, youth mental health, early years education, teacher training, teaching materials, improving course offerings, and improving teaching & learning systems across our district. Change does not happen overnight and thus the ARP is designed to allow schools to begin by collecting data on what learning loss occurred as a result of the pandemic and then directing money to address these specific areas. It is clear that hiring new teachers and staff is tempting, and I say it should go ahead, even though the argument exists that these teachers will have to go when the funding runs dry in 2024. I argue that you should spend the money on programs and staff and keep track of your data so that in 2024 it becomes inarguable when looking at the gains made, that the town needs to continue funding the staff/programs with the highest impact. Perhaps at that time, the three "ghost schools" in the district could be sold to continue to fund these programs & staffing.

In my opinion, the strongest suggestion is to make "near-term strategic investments that lay the groundwork for deeper, structural change over time." Are we doing what we always did? Sometimes that is the best way, but our district is too small to believe that we always have the answers. Look to other models, fund teachers to train in new methods that might benefit our

students, fund programming pre-k to 12 that allows students to have access to high quality diverse programming, invest in the newest tech, invest in teacher recruitment so that we are competitive with other districts and that our teachers can afford to stay at SPS - invest in teaching and learning that will be will us structurally even after the money is spent. This is our opportunity. I say we take it.

Think about your fondest memory of your school years. Did it involve one of your core classes? Or did it come from an extracurricular activity? Band? Drama? tennis? baseball? volleyball? clubs? Learning how to cook? Learning how to use power tools? Learning how to sew? Winning at debate? Going to girls/boys state? To improve students' mental health we need to go beyond the core classes and give them outlets to shine and grow to who they didn't know they could be. Funding for these types of programs has been cut away year after year, isn't post-pandemic the time to provide students with every opportunity to grow and thrive? Or is post-pandemic the time to spend millions of dollars installing air conditioning systems that at best will be used by students 4 weeks out of the year? It disgusted me to see that after we agreed to the bond to consolidate and refurbish our schools that not only were programs cut, and teachers cut, and paraprofessionals cut, but apparently the necessary building refurbishments were not completed? For those of you who grew up in southeastern CT, I hope you will agree with me that a few open windows in September and June are sufficient cooling for our buildings. Stonington was, and can be again, a place where teaching and learning are prioritized, rather than "park-like and pristine" imitations of southern California.

I will close my thoughts with an experience I had this year listening to data shared by our high school principal (whom I respect and support). He shared the figure that about 75% of our high school seniors go on to higher education. Upon hearing this, my immediate reaction was shame, as I felt we had failed 25% of our students who left school directly to the workplace without what I consider the proper skills to succeed to their fullest. It took me a moment to realize that the school's perspective on this statistic is one of pride, proud that a high percentage of students are entering university. The intent of the American Recovery Act is to ensure that our 25% are as successful as the rest.

Thank you for considering my opinions. I ask that you reject the superintendent's request that more than half of ARP money be allocated to air systems and that you instead request that all of the money be directed to address improving teaching and learning as well as the whole child and their mental health.

Sincerely,
Wendy Canty
50 Harborview Terrace
Stonington, CT 06378
860-460-3620

Comments, Public <publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org>

Tue, Jun 1, 2021 at 8:06 AM

To: Gordon Lord <gordon.lord@stoningtonschools.org>, Frank Todisco <ftodisco@stoningtonschools.org>, Van Riley <vriley@stoningtonschools.org>

public comment
[Quoted text hidden]

Wendy Canty <madamecanty@gmail.com>
To: publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org

Wed, Jun 2, 2021 at 2:31 PM

Cc: ftodisco@stoningtonschools.org, jmorehouse@stoningtonschools.org, Alisa Morrison <amorrison@stoningtonschools.org>, gordon lord@stoningtonschools.org, cesposito@stoningtonschools.org, heidi.simmons@stoningtonschools.org, frajab@stoningtonschools.org

Good evening:

I attempted to comment during last night's meeting by raising my hand on the zoom - I was not aware that only in person citizens would be able to speak. I hope you will be able to either forward my questions or supply some responses about this evening's meeting.

1. Please take the time to listen to your recording of the meeting- the sound was near to unintelligible. Thus you may have addressed my concerns but it was near impossible to hear.
2. I had been under the impression that public letters would be read. Please indicate how letters submitted by the public can be accessed.
3. From what I could hear, admittedly very little due to sound issues, the superintendent gave the impression that the full plan of how to allocate all ARP & Esser funds needs to be decided by June 23. Documentation from both the state and federal government show that what is due on the 23rd is actually how money will be used towards reopening and that further details for other spending does not necessarily need to be submitted by this date. I ask for clarification on this point.
4. Dates and next step were extremely difficult to hear. Please share how I can access information about next meetings and steps. I am unable to find this on the school website.

Thank you,
Wendy Canty

Sent from my iPhone

On May 31, 2021, at 9:47 PM, Madame Canty <madamecanty@gmail.com> wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]



Mask Wearing in 21-22 School Year

1 message

Jocelyn Stewart <jocelynstew@gmail.com>
To: publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org

Fri, Jun 11, 2021 at 4:06 PM

Please change the mask indoor decision as the presence of Covid 19 within our community is fractional. Kids, especially younger ones, need to see faces to fully understand what they are being told. These little kids need smiles to make friends in last ways.

While this is not currently an option for younger students, I strongly believe that the schools should at the least adhere to CDC guidelines that vaccinated people do not need to wear masks indoors. As vaccines become available to younger demographics the little kids would be able to lose the masks too.

While on a certain level I see it as unfair for teachers to be allowed to be maskless while unvaccinated children must wear them but conversely I think it is more important for kids to see their teachers faces.

Please let the kids breathe, learn and smile.

Jocelyn Stewart
(970) 901-6535
jocelynstew@gmail.com



Question: Days Returning

1 message

mrschrisadair@aol.com <mrschrisadair@aol.com>
To: publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org

Sun, Jun 13, 2021 at 7:21 AM

The written plan wasn't clear on the return to in person learning schedule. Does this plan assume that the children will be in school five days a week?

Christina Adair

Child in elementary school



No Mask for Stonington Schools!

1 message

Jeff Johnson <jefflanejohnson@gmail.com>
To: publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org

Sun, Jun 13, 2021 at 9:47 AM

Please do not make the 2021-22 school year a masked and socially distanced year for our children.

Children need to socialize. It is a very important part of their development to learn how to share, how to play with other children, and how to interact with their peers.

The children of Stonington have endured enough of the Covid-19 lock downs, social distancing and mask wearing. It is NOT in their best mental, emotional, physical or educational interest to continue with these strategies for the upcoming Fall school year.

The CT data clearly shows that Covid-19 is NOT nearly as dangerous as originally projected. In fact Covid-19 is FAR LESS dangerous to children than the Seasonal Flu and more in line with the Seasonal Flu in terms of mortality for the vast majority of adults.

* All data can be viewed directly from the State of Connecticut Covid-19 Dashboard at:

<https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Data-Tracker>

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Coronavirus/CTDPHCOVID19summary6082020.pdf>

As of June 9th 2020: 44,092 positive cases in CT

You can view the data on the website and determine that the numbers for the given data listed are extremely low for school aged children.

* Seasonal Flu Mortality Rate can be up to .1%

** The Average Age of Death in CT due to Covid is 80 years old or older.

It's abundantly clear that children are NOT in danger from Covid-19.

BUT what about the teachers safety???

Taking into account that the majority of teachers and school staff are under 60 years of age and the asymptomatic data, the average mortality rate of Covid-19 would be .12% for the ages of 0-59, inline with Seasonal Flu mortality.

If you're under 60 and don't have an underlying health condition your chances of dying from Covid-19 are approaching ZERO. Covid-19 is a serious illness for the elderly, especially those with pre-existing conditions and the immune compromised and those groups should be protected.

The Data does NOT justify the actions Stonington is taking in regards to Covid-19, especially when it comes to our children and schools. Anxiety, Depression, Suicides and Abuse are all on the rise in CT.

Children and the vast majority of the public should be treating Covid-19 as we would the Seasonal Flu, because that is what the data is telling us.

Please, open up our schools without social distancing or masks!! If they can't be mask free, what is the reason to take the risk of putting a vaccine into children that is still being tested for full FDA approval (it just has approval for emergency use at the moment)?

Again, please think of this information and reconsider the idea of masks for the next school year. This won't keep anyone safer and it will hurt the children's view of themselves and the world.

-Jeff Johnson



No Mask for Stonington Schools!

1 message

Jeff Johnson <jefflanejohnson@gmail.com>
To: publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org

Sun, Jun 13, 2021 at 2:12 PM

Note: I already wrote this once this morning, but did not include my address when signing the letter. I will include the email in full and give my name and address at the bottom.

Please do not make the 2021-22 school year a masked and socially distanced year for our children.

Children need to socialize. It is a very important part of their development to learn how to share, how to play with other children, and how to interact with their peers.

The children of Stonington have endured enough of the Covid-19 lock downs, social distancing and mask wearing. It is NOT in their best mental, emotional, physical or educational interest to continue with these strategies for the upcoming Fall school year.

The CT data clearly shows that Covid-19 is NOT nearly as dangerous as originally projected. In fact Covid-19 is FAR LESS dangerous to children than the Seasonal Flu and more in line with the Seasonal Flu in terms of mortality for the vast majority of adults.

* All data can be viewed directly from the State of Connecticut Covid-19 Dashboard at:

<https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Data-Tracker>

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Coronavirus/CTDPHCOVID19summary6082020.pdf>

As of June 9th 2020: 44,092 positive cases in CT

You can view the data on the website and determine that the numbers for the given data listed are extremely low for school aged children.

* Seasonal Flu Mortality Rate can be up to .1%

** The Average Age of Death in CT due to Covid is 80 years old or older.

It's abundantly clear that children are NOT in danger from Covid-19.

BUT what about the teachers safety???

Taking into account that the majority of teachers and school staff are under 60 years of age and the asymptomatic data, the average mortality rate of Covid-19 would be .12% for the ages of 0-59, inline with Seasonal Flu mortality.

If you're under 60 and don't have an underlying health condition your chances of dying from Covid-19 are approaching ZERO. Covid-19 is a serious illness for the elderly, especially those with pre-existing conditions and the immune compromised and those groups should be protected.

The Data does NOT justify the actions Stonington is taking in regards to Covid-19, especially when it comes to our children and schools. Anxiety, Depression, Suicides and Abuse are all on the rise in CT.

Children and the vast majority of the public should be treating Covid-19 as we would the Seasonal Flu, because that is what the data is telling us.

Please, open up our schools without social distancing or masks!! If they can't be mask free, what is the reason to take the risk of putting a vaccine into children that is still being tested for full FDA approval (it just has approval for emergency use at the moment)?

Again, please think of this information and reconsider the idea of masks for the next school year. This won't keep anyone safer and it will hurt the children's view of themselves and the world.

-Jeff Johnson

207 Long Wharf Rd

Mystic, CT 06355

Comments of Andrew Feinstein
On Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan
June 16, 2021

I am presenting to you as the parent of a rising sixth grade student, as a resident of Stonington, as a special education lawyer with his office in Stonington, as the Government Relations Chair of the national Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA), as the Legislative Chair of Special Education Equity for Kids in Connecticut (SEEK), and as an adjunct professor of special education at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). While informed by the organizations with which I work, this statement is mine alone.

The *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan* document accurately reflects the requirements of the Connecticut's American Rescue Plan Act Guidance, issued by the State Department of Education on June 3, 2021, https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Digest/2020-21/ARP_ESSER_Guidance.pdf. Unfortunately, the *Safe Return* document provides little beyond a recitation of the state requirements (which are, in turn, little more than a restatement of the federal requirements). Stonington needs to come up with a bold plan, based on extensive stakeholder input, for reimaging education, fertilized by what we have learned from the experiences of the last year.

It is my understanding that the key topic area for immediate focus tonight is students with disabilities. I will address that issue first and then go beyond it. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C. §1400 *et. seq.* and Connecticut's special education law, C.G.S. §10-76 *et. seq.*, continued in full force and effect during COVID. There was no waiver, no reduction in requirements, no lapse in coverage. There was a provision for Learning Model IEP Implementation Plans if the precise requirements of a student's IEP could not be met. But the Learning Model Implementation Plan had to be developed in consultation with parents and had to provide for a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

Notwithstanding this requirement, many students with disabilities failed to receive a FAPE during COVID closures and hybrid learning. Some needed hands-on instruction or therapy that could be provided. Some students could not attend to computer-based learning. Some had behavioral dysregulation which could not be worked on at-home or in limited, socially distanced cohorts. The failure to provide these students with a FAPE was not the fault of the terrific Allison Van Etten and her staff. Fault, however, does not play a part. Students who were denied a FAPE are entitled to services "calculated to provide the educational benefits that likely would have accrued from special education services the school district should have supplied in the first place." *Reid v. D.C.*, 401 F.3d 516, 524 (D.C. Cir. 2005).

There is a legal doctrine know as compensatory education under which such services can be awarded as a result of a due process filing, a state complaint, or a voluntary agreement. Yet, compensatory education only benefits those students and families with the knowledge and resources to fight for such a remedy. Instead, there is a developing concept of compensatory services, first posited by the United States Department of Education on March 12, 2020. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/q-and-a-providing-services-to-children-with-disabilities->

during-the-coronavirus-disease-2019-outbreak/. The idea, which Stonington should adopt, is that a substantial portion of the ARP ESSER funds be set aside to establish a program to remediate loss from failure to provide a FAPE for students with disabilities. Consistent with the IDEA, services would need to be individualized based on the needs of each student. But rather than waiting for a few parents to demand compensatory education, Stonington would systematically review the past and present levels of performance of all students with IEPs and, in consultation with parents, design services and interventions to remediate the loss. The services provided would, in some cases, be creative to make up for loss of social skill experience. In other cases, the services would be additional tutoring or related services. The result would be meeting the needs of students with disabilities, consistent with the law, and without the acrimony and cost of compensatory education litigation.

We also have a remedial obligation for regular education students. The federal law is clear that our focus needs to be as much or more on social emotional learning as it is on academics. We do not have a very precise national picture of learning loss, see <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/20210608-impacts-of-covid19.pdf>, but Stonington does have a very granular picture of where each student stands academically. The state guidance, contained in <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/AccelerateCT/AccelerateCTFramework.pdf>, makes plain that the focus should not be on deficits, but on moving forward academically, while backfilling for missed fundamentals. More critically, however, many students returning to full-time, in-person education in September will come back dysregulated. We need to devote resources to making school both a welcome structure and a warm sanctuary for these children. We do this by supporting activities that students want to do, especially group activities, role-playing, team building and non-academic activities.

Beyond the remediation obligation, the COVID-19 closures and hybrid learning have afforded us a remarkable and frankly unprecedented opportunity to recreate our education system. We know the current system is not working well for many students. The Common Core curriculum is well designed for those students going on to liberal arts higher education and to careers of the mind. It is not effective for many students, particularly males, who find abstract learning to be difficult and unpleasant. Even for students who excel at abstract learning, the pressures of persistent testing can be dispiriting. The use of testing for teacher evaluation is a serious morale destroyer for teachers. Let's use this money to ameliorate these issues.

Here are five ideas we can fund with ARP ESSER funds to make education in Stonington cutting edge and productive:

1. **Apprenticeship.** Many students who are not interested in abstract learning love to work with their hands. At the same time, the trades – carpentry, electricians, plumbers, HVAC techs, etc. – are increasingly filled by men in their 50's and 60's. We can start an apprenticeship program in the Middle and High School whereby students attend school part of the time and work as apprentices the rest of the day and earn credit for doing so. Rep. Greg Howard has been pushing this idea. Let's use some of the ARP ESSER money to hire a coordinator to get such a program up and running and to provide the necessary transportation to make it work.

2. **Nature.** There are numerous reasons to get kids out of the classroom and into the woods. They can learn a whole lot more about science by looking at trees and insects in the woods than they can by reading books. Being outside puts them in touch with their bodies creating a level of personal balance and integration which the classroom does not permit. We are fortunate to have seashore, wooded paths, hills to climb, and inland ponds all within the town. We should create a structured, but not overtly academic, program whereby virtually all students are outside for at least one hour each day, winter and summer. Having students in nature may be the single best antidote to screen addiction that exists.

3. **Testing.** The quantity of testing at all levels diverts from education, is oppressive for students and for teachers, and distorts the curriculum. Some tests are mandated by state or federal law. Many others are used to fuel the data-based education system we have created. This is rather unfortunate. We can continue to collect longitudinal data on students while discontinuing many of the mind-numbing, curriculum-interrupting tests we use now. The way to do that is by devoting some of our resources to devising better, more student-centered means of assessment. High on that list should be student self-assessment. Students are often far harsher critics of their own work than are teachers. Self-assessment is, unlike formal tests, a learning exercise in itself. While self-assessment makes student-to-student comparison unreliable, it does provide strong longitudinal data on the individual student, which is the best data to see if learning is happening.

4. **Teacher Evaluation.** The state has mandated an arcane, highly complex and thoroughly unreliable method of teacher evaluation. Stonington needs to create a system of teacher evaluation that identifies the great teachers. A critical piece of this would be twice-yearly surveys of students, parents, and other teachers. The most critical feature of a good teacher is connection with the student. A survey would quickly show which teachers connect with their students. Every teacher in the building knows who the strong teachers are and who are the weak ones. We need to tap that resource. We should use some of our resources to create the teacher evaluation system that teachers can respect, and which serves the purpose, which is communicating to teachers what they are doing well and what they are doing poorly. Having created a workable model of evaluation, we can convince the Legislature and the State Department of Education to abandon the failed system it has instituted.

5. **Sustainability.** The money under ARP ESSER must be committed by September 30, 2024. Our goal needs to be to find a way to make this money continue to pay dividends through the rest of the decade. We do not do so by hiring staff members who need to be laid off in three years. We do so by uptraining the existing staff. All employees of the Stonington public schools – teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, custodians, kitchen workers, drivers – as well as police officers who are assigned to schools, should be provided with extensive training in suicide prevention, de-escalation, restorative practices, group counseling, and relaxation techniques so that students find school a warm, welcoming, safe and supportive place. The goal needs to be to make school something that a child would not dream of missing, the place the child wants to be, the site at which the child can fulfill his or her potential.

Bricks and Mortar. Superintendent Riley proposed that half of the ESSER ARP funds go to repair and replace HVAC systems. It is certainly important that students and teachers work

in a comfortable environment. Still, the construction and maintenance of the physical plant should come from regular local tax payments, not from this special pot of COVID related money. By spending half of the ARP money on bricks and mortar, we are depriving ourselves of the opportunity to create an education system for the 21st Century in Stonington.

Stakeholder Involvement. The American Rescue Plan was quite specific on the need for stakeholder involvement in developing plans to spend the funds appropriated. The Stonington Board of Education should go beyond those requirements and create a set of task forces, involving teachers, parents, providers, and Board members to develop specific plans to make Stonington a leader in education for the future.



Gullickson, Carissa <carissa.gullickson@stoningtonschools.org>

Fwd: Mask policy for SHS fall 2021

1 message

Comments, Public <publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org>

Wed, Jun 16, 2021 at 3:31 PM

To: Carissa Gullickson <carissa.gullickson@stoningtonschools.org>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Lisa Rudzinsky** <lrudzinsky@comcast.net>

Date: Wed, Jun 16, 2021 at 2:25 PM

Subject: Mask policy for SHS fall 2021

To: <publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org>

I'm an advocate of masks not required at SHS in the fall of 2021 if you are fully vaccinated. The risk to a young person's mental health far exceeds their health risk of coming in contact with the virus by a large margin. Please let them return to a more normal school environment.

Sent from my iPhone

Dear Members of the Board of Education Advisory Committee for Return to School,

I am writing to you out of concern for the recent re-opening plan submitted in respect to the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds. The information provided specifically states that this funding is to address the disruptions in student learning, interpersonal interactions, and the social-emotional well-being of students and staff. It is my understanding that in order to receive the funding to address these issues that a return to school plan needs to be submitted. I was very disappointed to see that Stonington was submitting a plan that keeps in place the policies that were adopted in August of 2020 and was continuing to require face masks and social distancing for our students. These requirements for re-opening are in contradiction with the purpose of the funding.

I understand that these guidelines may have been necessary in the fall for re-opening but to plan to re-open our schools next year with the same guidelines is absurd. The current plan states that these policies and practices will remain in place until further direction from the CDC, CT DPH, and LLHD. This decision should not be made on a national level or even a state level. Our Board of Education for Stonington should be looking at our community, our students and staff, and making decisions that fit our school district. There may be other states or towns that require the continued use of these mitigation practices, but Stonington is not one of them. Other school districts in Connecticut are submitting their plans for the ARP ESSER funding with the guidance that masks and social distancing will not be required unless the public health measures dictate such a need. The language these other districts are using seems more suitable for a reopening plan and for funding that is focused on the social-emotional well-being of the children.

Stonington has been the on the slow end in response to the needs of our children as we began recovery from this pandemic compared to other local schools. We did not open for full in person learning at the start of the 2020-2021 school year even though our local Covid exposure numbers showed that we could. We were one of the last districts to have a plan to fully reopen this past spring, and it was the plan of the administration to remain hybrid this entire school year. We probably would have stayed hybrid if it were not for the push back from parents, which certainly showed that decisions were not being made with the rights and interests of the children in mind. These decisions had been made to the detriment of our children, and as a parent I cannot sit by and continue to allow decisions to be made that are harmful to our children. The science has shown that children are not at high risk for Covid-19 side effects, and it has also been proven that they are not at high risk for spreading it either. Some states have even mandated that masks cannot be required in schools, further supporting the notion that this not a necessary requirement for our children. Just this past week Vermont stated that K-12 schools in their state can no longer require masks to be worn, and this is just the most recent of many states that have done so. Those staff members in our District that wanted to be vaccinated have had the opportunity to do so and now it is in the best interest of our district and our children to try to move on from this period of time the best we can, not act as though things have not improved since last year.

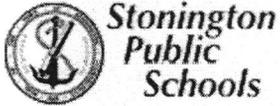
The decisions made this past year have had a negative impact on the children in Stonington and it has been proven through the test scores and just by looking at the social-emotional well-being of our children. This funding is being provided to help with the harm that has been done to the children throughout this pandemic, yet Stonington is submitting a plan

that continues to negatively impact our children. Why do we as parents need to continue to fight for our children when we have a Board of Education that was elected to represent us and the needs of our children and an administration that was hired to do the same? But if we must continue to fight for the representation of our children, because the Board of Education and Administration will not, then that is what we will do. Stonington has seen a decline in enrollments, and it will continue to do so if the needs of the children of this district are not put first.

The language on this plan needs to be changed before it is submitted for the funding. The children in this district need the opportunity to return to school in a manner that will provide the best learning environment, interpersonal interactions, and the social-emotional well-being of students. A plan needs to be submitted that states that masks and social distancing will not be required in the fall unless public health measures dictate such a need. I am not okay with the Board or Administration attempting to use this funding and the submitted plan as a reason to require our children be masked in the fall when the science shows that it is to their detriment and not necessary.

Sincerely,

Nicholas & Ashley Tewell
Parents of a 2nd Grader and Incoming Kindergartner



Gullickson, Carissa <carissa.gullickson@stoningtonschools.org>

Fwd: ARP Memo - Parks & Recreation

1 message

Comments, Public <publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org>

Wed, Jun 16, 2021 at 3:31 PM

To: Carissa Gullickson <carissa.gullickson@stoningtonschools.org>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Richard Ward** <rward@stonington-ct.gov>

Date: Wed, Jun 16, 2021 at 10:44 AM

Subject: RE: ARP Memo - Parks & Recreation

To: publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org <publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org>

Thank you for the opportunity to give feedback. I commend everyone involved with keeping our kids safe this past school – it was a Herculean effort – THANK YOU! My only thoughts are to spell out a return plan for outside groups (such as Stonington Rec) being allowed to use the gymnasiums and/or classrooms afterschool into the evenings and on the weekends. As you know, we were not able to use them at all this past school year (justifiably so) and as a result, much needed youth sports leagues and several events were CANCELLED. Again, it was completely understandable and justifiably so this past school year - my hope going forward, is that we would be welcomed back this coming school year and a plan to address what will need to be done is spelled out here.

Thanks for the consideration and all the best GOING FORWARD!

--

Richard Ward

Town of Stonington

Parks and Recreation

<https://stonington.recdesk.com/>

166 South Broad Street

Pawcatuck, CT 06379

Phone: 860-535-5066



From: Gullickson, Carissa <carissa.gullickson@stoningtonschools.org>

Sent: Friday, June 11, 2021 11:51 AM

To: Richard Ward <rward@stonington-ct.gov>

Cc: Van Riley <vriley@stoningtonschools.org>

Subject: ARP Memo - Parks & Recreation

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good morning,

Please see the attached memo sent on behalf of Dr. Riley, Superintendent of Schools.

Thank you,

Carissa B. Gullickson

District Administration Office
Stonington Public Schools

Phone: 860-572-0506 x2105

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.



Masks 2021-22 school year

1 message

Dave Hammond <davehammond0203@gmail.com>

Wed, Jun 16, 2021 at 4:05 PM

To: "publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org" <publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org>

Cc: "Hammond, Susan J" <susan.j.hammond@pfizer.com>

Hi - we are parents of Wynn Hammond who will be a senior next year

We believe that if a student has been vaccinated, they do not need to wear a mask at school. This is consistent with CDC and State guidelines.

Wynn performed his civic duty for the good of public health and was vaccinated in March and April (2nd dose). The goal is for everyone who can be, to be vaccinated so infection pathways are blocked. We have taken these steps as a family not only for our own health and safety, but also the health and safety of everyone we encounter. Wynn should not be penalized - by having to wear a mask - for doing the right thing.

Please consider a policy that relieves the vaccinated from wearing masks which detracts from the education process.

Thank you
Dave Hanmind



Public Comment Received Re: Masks 2021-22 school year

Dave Hammond <davehammond0203@gmail.com>

Wed, Jun 16, 2021 at 5:00 PM

To: Ana deOliveira <adeoliveira@stoningtonschools.org>, "Comments, Public" <publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org>

Hi -sorry I misspelled my last name thanks to trying to type on the phone. Name and address:

Dave Hammond
350 Greenhaven Rd
Pawcatuck CT 06379

Thank you

Dave

[Quoted text hidden]



Return to School

1 message

KRISTOFOR FISHER <kfisha2002@yahoo.com>

Wed, Jun 16, 2021 at 4:50 PM

To: "publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org" <publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org>

Dear Members of the Board of Education Advisory Committee for Return to School,

I am writing to you out of concern for the recent re-opening plan shared in respect to the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds. The information provided specifically states that this funding is to address the disruptions in student learning, interpersonal interactions, and the social-emotional well-being of students and staff. I understand that to receive the funding to address these issues that a return to school plan must be submitted. It was very disappointing to see that Stonington was submitting a plan that keeps in place the policies that were adopted in August of 2020 and was continuing to require face masks and social distancing for our students. These requirements for re-opening are in contradiction with the purpose of the funding. These guidelines may have been essential in the fall for re-opening but to plan to re-open our schools next year with the same guidelines is not necessary. The current plan states that these policies and practices will remain in place until further direction from the CDC, CT DPH, and LLHD. This decision should not be made on a national level. Our Board of Education for Stonington should be looking at our community, our students, and staff, and making decisions that fit our school district. Many other states, including Vermont this past week, have mandated that masks could not be required in K-12 schools. Other school districts in Connecticut are submitting their plans for the ARP ESSER funding with the guidance that masks and social distancing will not be required unless the public health measures dictate such a need. The language these other districts are using seems more suitable for a reopening plan and for funding that is focused on the social-emotional well-being of our children.

It is my request that the language in this plan for re-opening be changed to language similar to that being used by these other districts in Connecticut and not require masks to be worn in the fall. Our children's social-emotional well-being is at stake and a plan needs to be submitted that will protect their best interests and allow them to move forward from this past year and continue to develop and grow in a positive manner.

Sincerely,
Kristofor and Nicole Fisher



Meeting tonight

1 message

Kerensa <kerensak@comcast.net>

Wed, Jun 16, 2021 at 4:56 PM

To: publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org

What is the point of having our kids vaccinated if they still have to wear masks?

Isn't it a little too soon to be making this decision? We have three months. Can't we just enjoy the summer?

Kerensa Mansfield

Sent from my iPhone