



Southbridge Public Schools

132 Torrey Road, Southbridge MA 01550

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September 18, 2020

Dear Families,

This week we started the 2020 - 2021 school year with students learning remotely, in person, and in a hybrid model. While we are still working to improve procedures and responding to questions as situations arise, staff and students at our schools did remarkably well adapting to new systems. Thank you to our teachers, staff, and families for the support and adaptability you have shown in these unusual circumstances.

Next week, we will announce a virtual event for parents and guardians of students in Elementary School (K-5) to provide you with information on how to best support your child during remote learning. This meeting will be in a similar format to the virtual open house events that we have had over the last couple of weeks. We will address some of the most common questions that have come up for parents in the first week of school and you will have an opportunity to ask questions about remote learning. Please check our website, social media, and your email for an announcement of the date and time of this meeting.

New guidance from the Commissioner of Education provides recommendations for when districts should consider moving to a fully remote model of instruction and how to evaluate [the weekly color-coded health metrics](#) provided by the Department of Public Health. The commissioner has clarified that districts should not make closure decisions on a designation of the "red" category occurring in a single week, but that they should consider at least three weeks of data from the color-coded system along with other sources of data before considering a district-wide move to remote learning. Southbridge has been identified in the green or white category for the past three weeks. As a reminder, you can find the Southbridge Public Schools color category designation on the [homepage of our website](#). The metric is updated weekly on Wednesday night, so you will find any changes to the color category Thursday morning.

Meals continue to be available for remote learners or hybrid learners on days that they attend school remotely. Families can pick up meals at Eastford Road School, Charlton Street School, or West Street School Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. Students will be provided with a lunch for the day and a breakfast for the following day. Please arrive at the meal sites with a mask on.

The district continues to wait for our large order of Chromebooks. I am asking families to consider using their own computers to access remote learning if you own one so that we can reserve our stock of Chromebooks for families who do not have access to one. If you were assigned a Chromebook but do not need it because you have another suitable device, please consider returning it to your child's school. Unfortunately we still do not know when the chromebooks will arrive. When the district does receive the new chromebooks every student will be assigned their own.

This week, the Southbridge Middle High School Athletics Department announced that the district will be offering boys' and girls' soccer and boys' and girls' cross country for grades 8 - 12 this fall. Sign ups will begin the week of September 21 and practices will begin on October 5. For more information

about guidelines for the athletic season, please contact Athletic Director Frank Koumanelis [by email](#) or find updates on the [athletics page of our website](#).

Last week, I let you know that we did not have the full number of bus monitors that we needed to staff every bus. We currently have 14 bus monitors and will be at full capacity when we hire a total of 17. We have prioritized the placement of bus monitors on Eastford Road buses and we continue to recruit for this position. If you have any questions about your child's bus route, please reach out to your child's school.

Communication During the School Year

We remain committed to providing you with updated information about the school year, just as we have over the summer. You will find announcements on our website, on our official social media accounts, and through other communication channels such as email and phone calls. If you would like to update your contact information or confirm that we have the correct email address and phone number for your family, you can write to help@southbridgepublic.org or ayuda@southbridgepublic.org. You can also call or text (774) 601-0082 with updates to your contact information. For questions about your student's schedule, please contact the school directly.

We remain committed to providing students in Southbridge with rich opportunities for learning under any circumstance. Thank you for your patience and hard work during this unusual time and your collaboration in creating our reopening plan. Together, we have built a strong foundation for safety and learning in the new school year.

Regards,

Jeffrey A. Villar, Ph.D.
Receiver/Superintendent
Southbridge Public Schools