



# **SOUTHBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

## **2021 REOPENING PLAN**

August 14, 2020

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The development of this plan took into account two guiding principles; 1) our most important charge is to protect the health and safety of our students and staff, and 2) we must always seek to provide our students with the highest quality learning environment possible. This plan aims to reopen the Southbridge Public Schools while strictly adhering to these guiding principles. The plan development was informed by key stakeholders including parents, teachers, educational assistants, administrators, and other staff members.

Stakeholder input was gathered through surveys generated by the district and the Southbridge Education Association (Teacher and Educational Assistant Union), in-person and telephone interviews of parents and guardians conducted by district employees, and input from important employee planning committees (Teachers, Nurses, Administrators, etc.). A list of these committees and their membership can be found in Appendix A.

A feasibility study was conducted by the district administration as it prepared to provide the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) with a report outlining how the district might reopen through three scenarios: in-person full time, hybrid (part-time remote learning with part-time in school), or completely remote. The results of the feasibility study can be found in Appendix B. The study examined each of the three reopening scenarios while considering district capacity (numbers of teachers and other staff, students, and available resources), the health and safety requirements established by DESE, guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control, and parental preference data collected through our outreach.

After careful consideration, Southbridge is planning on a full return to school for all students enrolled in grades PreK-5 and a hybrid model for students in grades 6-12. Additionally, all families will have the choice to enroll their children in full-time remote learning. We made this decision as a result of the following factors.

- 1) Approximately 45% of parents indicated that they desire to keep their children home and to engage in remote learning.
- 2) Priority has been placed on using district resources to ensure that elementary-aged children can return to school in-person safely.
- 3) The secondary schools concluded that a hybrid model of education is the safest for our students after considering the complexity of high school scheduling with its larger class sizes, the transportation limitations, and the shift of available resources to the earlier grades.

### **Description of Learning Environments**

**School for those enrolled in the Remote Learning Academy-** The program will be an opt-in offering for parents who prefer to have their children work remotely from home 100% of the time. Students in kindergarten through grade 12 can choose this option. This plan will allow students to remain enrolled in the Southbridge Public Schools and participate in learning as a part of a remote learning academy.

In this model, students will receive instruction through the use of Chromebooks that will be provided by the district (qualifying families may also receive WIFI hotspots). As it currently stands, the instructional plan is to utilize a mix of online learning tools aligned with the district curriculum (iReady, Ready Math, Wonders, Etc.), Edgenuity (an online self-directed learning tool), and real-time learning with instructors (synchronously). Students will be expected to log in to their computer and access their virtual classroom live following a predetermined schedule. They will be present for online teaching and be able to ask questions and interact with their teacher. Some learning will be asynchronous, completed independently, much as homework has always been. The Remote Learning Academy will be very different from the academic programming during the initial shut down last spring. Grades and attendance will be tracked and participation will be required with a much higher level of rigor. We believe the added structure will be helpful to both students and their parents.

**School for families who select in-person learning-** In-person learning will look different for students in Pre-K through grade five, compared to students in grades six through twelve.

**Elementary Students,** K through grade five, who are not participating in the Remote Learning Academy, will attend school in-person five days a week, every week. Strict safety requirements will be in place. For example, students will sit 6 feet apart and will wear masks. The school schedule will change to allow more time for students to go outdoors and to have activity and mask breaks. Breakfast and lunch will be held in classrooms following DESE health regulations. All students will be assigned a Chromebook for the duration of the school year and teachers will incorporate this technology into their daily instruction. This is both to enhance student learning and prepare for a potential school closure if necessary because of the pandemic. Finally, there will be changes to the arrival and dismissal time of school day for some students due to transportation health and safety guidelines.

**Secondary Students.** Students in grades six through twelve who are not participating in the Remote Learning Academy will participate in a Hybrid school that includes attending in-person school two days a week and three days remote from home. This is necessary to reduce the number of students in the building and on the busses while maintaining 6' social distancing. Remote Learning will consist of participation in synchronous and asynchronous academic activities with live access to content area teachers each day. Course work will include assessments, homework, classwork assignments, and projects. Students will follow their in-person schedule, as well as a remote day schedule. All secondary students will be assigned a Chromebook that will be incorporated into the instruction. Grades and attendance will be tracked and participation in remote learning will be required with a much higher level of rigor than was expected in the spring shutdown. We believe the added structure will be helpful to both students and their parents.

#### **Additional Resources Applied to the Hybrid Learning Model**

- Southbridge has ordered approximately 1850 Chromebook computers and 400 WIFI hotspots (hotspots are reserved for families based on need).
- A three month supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has been ordered including 26,000 medical masks, 5,000 N95 masks, 25,000 pairs of gloves, and over 648 gallons of hand

sanitizer, among other items.

- Cleaning and disinfecting equipment and supplies will be made available to staff.
- Additional Staff has been added including:
  - A Health and Safety Registered Nurse Coordinator to lead the districts' health and safety procedures concerning COVID-19.
  - A technology support position was created to support families, students, and teachers as they learn to use new technology.
  - Custodial personnel to ensure cleaning and disinfecting will occur throughout the school day.
- The school calendar (Appendix C) was adjusted affording fourteen professional development days for teacher training prior to the start of the school year that will occur from August 24th through September 11th. The first day of school was changed from August 24th to September 14th and the last day of school shifted from June 14th to June 17th. This change in start date also provides more time for our technology and PPE orders to arrive and to be properly distributed.
- Professional development and technical support for teachers in the use of technology and instruction have been secured for the entire school year.

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Dear Southbridge Community

This document is the Southbridge Public Schools Reopening Plan for the 2021 school year. The development of this plan took into account two guiding principles: (1) the health wellbeing and safety of our students and our staff and (2) the pressing need to provide our students with a high-quality learning environment. After the unprecedented shutdown of last spring, I believe we all know that our students are best served when they are attending school in-person. We also know that we must remain vigilant in order to keep our community safe from the effect of COVID-19.

Our experience during the spring shutdown confirmed the difficulties that remote learning presents for students, families, and teachers. We recognize the challenges that parents face when students are engaged in remote learning. Many families face difficult child care situations as not all guardians are able to work from home. Additionally, the challenge of working and ensuring that students remain focused and engaged in remote learning was extraordinarily difficult for families. We also know that our children learn best when engaged with their teachers and peers in person and this is especially true for our youngest learners who are just beginning to acquire critical literacy and problem-solving skills. These pressing needs are why we are prioritizing the reopening of Southbridge Public Schools for all our elementary-aged children and students with special needs.

The plans laid out in this document seek to restructure how our schools function enabling our return to teaching children in person while safeguarding the wellbeing of our students and our faculty. They were developed by a district task force who carefully analyzed information gathered through family surveys and interviews, employee surveys and feedback, and guidance provided by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and the Centers for Disease Control. This information can be found in Appendix D.

Despite our best planning it is important to recognize that we are still living in a global pandemic that is unpredictable resulting in conditions changing without notice. As circumstances in the state and town change, so will our plans. Just as the health, safety and educational needs of all our Southbridge students and staff shape every component of this plan, the same sentiment will be at the forefront of all decisions once school reopens as we constantly analyze and assess what is happening in our classrooms, schools, and town. This plan was developed to ensure a quick pivot from in-person to remote learning if conditions warrant. I am committed to continuing, consistent, and transparent communication as we reopen school in September.

Respectfully,

Jeffrey A. Villar, Ph.D.

Receiver / Superintendent

# **SOUTHBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS REOPENING TEACHING & LEARNING PLAN**

Surveys of parents in Southbridge suggest that approximately 45% of parents are not comfortable with their children returning to in-person learning in the fall. In response to these data, we developed a multi-faceted plan that includes in-person learning, a hybrid model, and a Remote Learning Academy, (an opt-in option for families who want their children to stay home 100% of the time).

We determined that providing three different models of school was the best approach for Southbridge in order to balance the safety and educational needs of students based on age group, the needs and desires of families, and the necessary support for students with special needs. These models are: 1) a Remote Learning Academy for families who prefer their children learn remotely from home; 2) a full-time in-person model for elementary-aged students; and 3) a hybrid model for grades 6-12 (secondary), with 2 days of in-person learning and 3 days of remote learning. The decision to follow a hybrid model for the secondary schools is based on the large number of students who attend these schools wanting to ensure the highest level of safety and health protocols for students participating in in-person learning. Below you will find a brief summary of each option. The remainder of this document provides more specific details about the development of this plan.

## **I. Southbridge Public Schools Three Learning Models**

### **Remote Learning Academy**

This is an Opt-In option for parents of children in Kindergarten through grade 12 who prefer to have their children educated 100% remotely from home. The district administrators are creating plans that will ensure consistent teaching and learning for all students including those attending the Remote Learning Academy. For all students participating in the Remote Learning Academy, a Chromebook will be provided by the district to ensure participation, attendance will be taken and assignments will be graded. The district is also providing qualifying families with access to internet hotspot devices. Due to the different developmental needs of our students, the Remote Academy will look different for students in elementary versus secondary grades. However, the consistency for each grade level includes: 1) students learning from home will follow a specific schedule and participate in virtual classes with their teacher and peers and, 2) students will complete academic assignments independently. In the High School, for example, students attending the in-person hybrid plan and students participating in the Remote Learning Academy will be divided into two cohorts (as described in the hybrid learning model above). Each cohort will participate in live, in-person, teaching for two days and “live”, remote, for three days. “Live” teaching for students learning remotely will occur through a google platform that students will access with their Chromebooks. Both sets of students will receive the same lessons with content specific teachers as well as follow the same schedules.

If conditions change and it is no longer safe to engage in the in-person elementary and hybrid

secondary models presented in this plan, the district will shift to a complete remote learning model based completely on the Remote Learning Academy.

### **In-Person Elementary Learning**

Pre-K through grade five students, who are not participating in the Remote Learning Academy will attend school in-person five days a week, every week. Some students' school days could be impacted by transportation guidelines as school arrival and dismissal times might change. We are working with our transportation provider to develop a new transportation schedule to address this issue. All students who attend school will be assigned a Chromebook and teachers are being trained to incorporate technology in their lessons. Students will access the Chromebooks during school and will only be sent home if there is a need to shift to complete remote learning.

The feasibility study revealed that with added classrooms and educators all Southbridge Public School elementary students could return to school for 5 days a week in the fall. With additional classroom space identified and educators hired, all classrooms will adhere to 6' physical distancing. Each classroom is outfitted with either hand sanitizer and/or sinks with soap. All staff will be expected to wear masks. All students will be required to wear masks as well. Masks will be provided as needed.

### **Accommodations to the 2020-2021 school year for elementary schools in accordance with health guidelines**

1. The class size will be smaller. The average elementary class size for the previous school year was approximately 17. In order to maintain 6' physical distance, most elementary class sizes will be reduced by several students. This change will require the addition of new classroom spaces and hiring teachers.
2. Movement in the building and transitions will be limited to help maintain the 6' physical distancing rule.
  - a. Art and Music curriculum will be delivered in the grade-level classrooms.
  - b. Breakfast and lunch will be served in the classroom with six feet distancing
  - c. Arrival and dismissal procedures will be changed to ensure proper distancing
  - d. Bathroom and nurse visit processes will be adjusted
3. Physical Education classes will be modified to ensure adherence to all the safety precautions and will occur outside whenever possible
4. Increased movement breaks will be provided. Students will have frequent opportunities to be outside, without a mask but adhering to physically distancing. These will be short periods of time scheduled throughout the day.
5. Students will receive explicit instruction on mask-wearing, physical distancing, transitioning, bathroom procedures, visiting the nurse, and other aspects of schooling

that changed due to the pandemic.

6. Visitors: Guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recommends no outside visitors or volunteers except for the purpose of contracted service providers for the purpose of special education. A log of all visitors will be kept and maintained for 30 days

### **District priorities and practices remaining consistent across school years for elementary students**

1. Teaching and Learning: Elementary students will continue working in the Wonders curriculum for ELA. The district is moving forward with Ready Classroom Math as a new math curriculum. Technical support from The Hill for Literacy will continue.
2. Culture and Climate: PBIS practices will remain the same with new learning opportunities to include health and safety lessons. The incentive system and school store will continue.
3. Wednesday one-hour early release is scheduled again for this year.
4. Student Services: Students will continue receiving services as prescribed by their IEP or 504 plans.
5. School Adjustment Counselors will be available to support students' social-emotional and behavioral needs

### **Hybrid Secondary Learning**

Grades 6-12, who are not participating in the Remote Learning Academy, will participate in the hybrid learning model. Seeking to reduce the number of students in the classrooms, the hybrid model calls for students to attend in-person school two days per week and remote three days. Students are divided into two cohorts, Red and White. Whenever possible, siblings will be placed in the same color cohort. In this model, 50% of students (Red) attend school on Monday and Tuesday and participate remotely Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. The other 50% (white) attend school remotely Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday and attend in-person Thursday and Friday. Remote Learning will consist of both synchronous and asynchronous academic activities and students will work remotely with content area teachers. Attendance will be taken in each class and all course work will be graded, for both in-person and remote learning. Students with special needs will have a customized learning plan based upon the demands of their Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). All students who attend school will be assigned a Chromebook. Students in grades 6 to 12 will be expected to care for their Chromebook and bring it to and from school fully charged each day. Teachers will use Chromebooks to enhance their daily lessons.

# Hybrid Learning Model

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Red Group In-Person	Red Group In-Person	All students Remote	White Group In-Person	White Group In-Person

**Middle School Hybrid Model.** Our grades 6-8 students enrolled in Hybrid Learning will be divided into two cohorts: Red Team, and White Team. Half of the enrolled students in each grade will be the Red Team, and half will be the White Team. One cohort will attend school to participate in In-Person Learning on Mondays and Tuesdays and will stay home to participate in Remote Learning on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. The other cohort will participate in In-Person Learning on Thursdays and Fridays, and Remote Learning on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. The in-person classrooms will be set up to accommodate physical distancing.

**High School Hybrid Model.** Students will be divided into two cohorts, Red House and White House (as described above). The in-person classroom will be organized to accommodate for physical distancing as well as the technology for synchronously teaching the remote learners. The remote learners will include both the opposite house (Red or White depending on the day) as well as any student enrolled in the Remote Learning Academy who is enrolled in the class. Students participating in both in-person and remote learning will be expected to follow the same coursework, attendance, and discipline expectations.

**Accommodations to the 2020-2021 school year for secondary schools in accordance with health guidelines**

1. Students in grades 6-10 will be organized in grade level and classroom cohorts. This means students will be grouped with the same students for all classes throughout the day. This is done to help minimize the mixing of students and to facilitate contact tracing.
2. Band, Chorus and Physical Education will be rethought to ensure adherence to all Department of Elementary and Secondary Education safety precautions. For example, classes may be held outside whenever possible or will have to shift to a more theoretical focus while participation is limited due to health concerns.
3. Movement in the building and transitions.

- a. All students will transition between classes by maintaining physical distancing and following the traffic patterns taught and enforced by staff and outlined on the floor.
  - b. Breakfast and lunch will be held in classrooms (with 6 feet social distancing or physical barriers), or outside whenever possible.
  - c. Arrival and dismissal procedures will be changed to eliminate large groupings of students.
  - d. Bathroom and nurse visit processes will be adjusted and new procedures will be taught to all students.
4. Safe mask breaks will be scheduled throughout the school day.
  5. Students will be instructed on safety procedures such as, how to safely wear a mask, physical distance, transition in the hallways, walk themselves safely to the bathroom, or the nurse.
  6. Visitors in the building will be generally prohibited with rare exceptions and strict adherence to safety requirements.

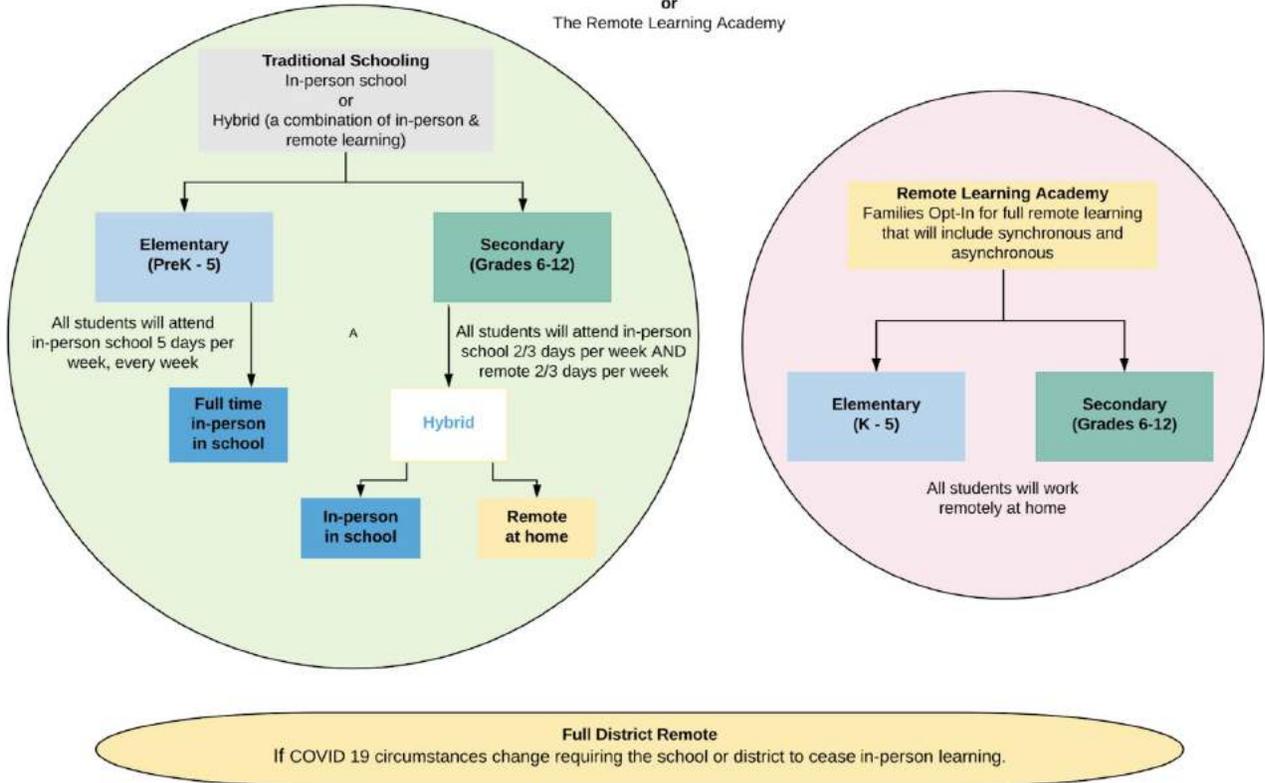
**District priorities and practices remaining consistent across school years for secondary students**

- 1) Teaching and Learning: ELA and math technical assistance will continue with Instructional Partners, utilizing the Guide Books (ELA) and Illustrative Math curriculums.
- 2) Culture and Climate: PBIS practices will remain the same with new learning opportunities to include health and safety lessons. The incentive system and school store will continue.
- 3) Students will follow their 7-period schedule (last year it was a 6-period schedule).
- 4) Students will access their content area teachers five days a week.
- 5) Student Services: Students will continue receiving services as prescribed by their IEP or 504 plans.
- 6) School Adjustment Counselors and School Engagement Officers will be available to support students' social-emotional and behavioral needs.

Below, a visual graphic of the recommended 2021 Southbridge Reopening Plan is presented.

## SOUTHBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2021 REOPENING PLAN

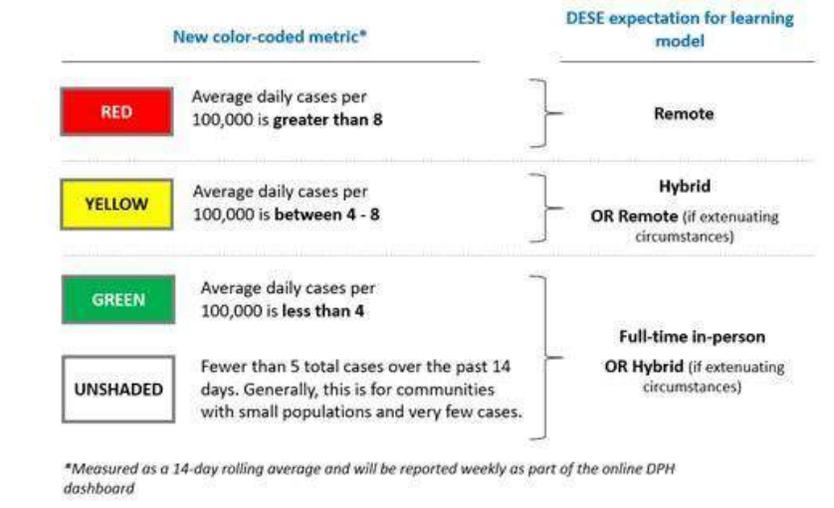
Families will Opt for either Traditional Schooling  
or  
The Remote Learning Academy



## II. Health and Safety Guidelines

Based on guidelines from DESE, and the CDC, Southbridge Public Schools has adopted the following policies and regulations aimed at maintaining the health and safety of students and staff.

**Community Monitoring.** Southbridge COVID-19 infection rates will be published each Wednesday on the district website. The Department of Public Health releases its Weekly COVID-19 Public Health Report that contains critical metrics for each municipality. The report will also include a color-coded indication of the levels of COVID-19 positives tests within a community over the past two week period. DESE has developed recommendations that the district will follow based on the community status.



**Physical Distancing.** All Southbridge schools developed plans for 6’ physical distancing for the entirety of the school day, including but not limited to, in the classrooms, during transitions, and arrival/dismissal.

**Masks/Face Coverings.** All SPS students are required to wear masks. ALL Adults, including educators and staff, are required to wear masks/face coverings. Exceptions to the mask/face covering requirement may be made for those whom it is not possible due to a medical condition, disability impact, or other health or safety factors. However when masks are not possible due to specific medical needs alternative measures must be taken (e.g. considerations such as additional health screening, increased social distancing, additional protection for others such as N95 masks, etc). Mask breaks are required to be scheduled throughout the day.

- a. **Hand Hygiene.** Handwashing with soap and water is the best option, alcohol-based hand sanitizer may be utilized when necessary. Students and staff are required to exercise hand hygiene upon arrival to school, before eating, before putting on and taking off masks, after using the bathroom, and before dismissal. Hand sanitizer dispensers will be distributed throughout all schools.

**Classroom Set-Up/Procedures.** Classrooms will be set up with individual student desks/tables positioned so students will be at least 6’ apart. Seats will be assigned and positioned in the same direction facing forward. Classroom locations may change to maximize social distancing. Classes will utilize outdoor spaces, as appropriate for both instruction and periodic mask breaks. Students are grouped into cohorts (PreK - grade 10) whenever possible. This will limit student mixing and allow for contact tracing if necessary.

**Nursing/Medical Procedures.** The Southbridge Public Schools created a new position to help guide its efforts of ensuring a safe learning environment during the 2020-2021 school year. A Licensed Public School Nurse was hired to focus on the implementation of health and hygiene plans during the COVID-19 crisis. This individual will work with the school-based nurses to ensure that students and staff are adhering to state and local policies as well as to provide guidance in addressing all COVID-19 related matters. Schools have identified a “Medical Waiting Room” (i.e., isolation room space) that is

well ventilated and separate from the nurses' office. If a student tests positive for COVID-19, school officials will refer to the protocol outlined by DESE (Appendix D).

### **III. Transportation**

Prior to the start of school, families will receive bus assignments and pick up times. The following health and safety precautions are in place to support safe school bus operations.

**Masks.** All students and staff on the bus, regardless of age, are required to wear a mask at all times. (Procedures are in place for students with high needs and are exempt from wearing a mask).

**Hand Sanitizing.** Hand sanitizer dispensers were installed at the entrance of the bus. Students and staff are required to follow hand sanitizing procedures upon arrival to school.

**Distancing.** Students will be seated with no more than one student per bench, alternating sides for each row. Children from the same household may sit together and in closer proximity.

**Ventilation.** Windows will be kept open at all times during operation, unless not possible due to extreme weather conditions

**Seat Assignments.** Students will be assigned to a single bus and a single seat.

**Bus Monitors.** This position will be posted for hire by SPS and will be responsible for managing the health and safety expectations on the bus. These expectations are including but not limited to: Asking whether students received an at-home pre-screening; Managing vehicle entry/exit process including directing students to assigned seating; Ensuring all health and safety requirements are met; Coordinating arrival/departure and entry/dismissal protocols; Assisting with routine cleaning and sanitizing activities

**Cleaning and Disinfecting.** Southbridge Public Schools worked with bus contractors to ensure that busses and vans are properly cleaned and disinfected regularly. All high-touch surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly after each route. Thorough routine cleaning including dusting and wet -mopping vehicle floors, removing trash, wiping heat and air conditioner vents, and spot cleaning walls and seats, will occur prior to disinfecting

### **IV. Communication Regarding Updates**

The district is utilizing the following tools to communicate with families:

1. Regular written communication in English and Spanish is published to the district website ([Southbridgepublic.org](http://Southbridgepublic.org)).
2. The One Call telephone communication system is also utilized to provide families with

messages in English and Spanish and to notify the community of new documents posted online.

3. The district also maintains social media sites to facilitate community-level communication.
4. Family liaisons employed at each school work to facilitate family-level communication.
5. The district regularly surveys families electronically about concerns and preferences with regard to COVID-19.
6. The Aspen Family Portal has been enabled to communicate announcements and student grades. Outreach to families about this tool continues.

## **V. Facilities-Related Changes**

Please see Appendix E for expanded COVID-19 related regulations.

### **Summary of Major Facility Changes**

**Classroom Configuration.** To ensure each classroom is maintaining all safety requirements, each has been configured to allow for 6' physical distancing between students. Each has been emptied of extra furniture and supplies leaving only necessary work surfaces and curriculum. Adequate supplies of hand sanitizer are located in each classroom. In many cases, classroom furniture has been replaced to better accommodate the distances required for physical distancing.

**Health and Safety Protocols.** Staff and students are expected to follow the health and safety protocols developed including frequent handwashing, maintaining physical distance, following one-way directions in the hallways, limiting the use of bathrooms in high traffic areas. Visual cues, such as posters, markings on the floor, etc. are in place to help remind students and staff of the new procedures.

**Food Service and Distribution.** Following the CDC recommendations, students attending in-person schooling will eat breakfast and lunch in the classrooms with a minimum of 6' physical distancing. Students will be taught how to remove and store masks during eating and will wash their hands before and after each meal. Whenever possible food will be individually wrapped. Students participating in remote learning will access breakfast and lunch during a grab-and-go meal site, similar to spring and summer.

**Visitor Protocols.** Guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recommends no outside visitors or volunteers except for the purpose of contracted service providers for the purpose of special education. A log of all visitors will be kept and maintained for 30 days.

**Parent/Guardian Visits.** Parents, guardians, or other student contacts picking up students will only occur in the school office and all safety precautions will be required including (1) mask/face coverings; (2) social distancing; (3) sanitizing hands; and (4) limiting capacity to one visitor in the office at a time. Families will be encouraged to have the same adult drop off and pick-up

each child.

**Arrival and Dismissal.** Safety considerations have been prioritized to protect the health of the school community. School-based procedures have also been developed to adhere to COVID-19 health precautions. These procedures will be communicated to families and signage is in place to help remind families and staff.

**Medical Waiting Room “Care Space”.** Each school will have a space separate from the nurse’s office that will be used when a student is presenting with COVID-19 symptoms. Each school has designated a self-contained space near an exit/entrance.

## **VI. Special Education**

The Office of Student Services is committed to providing support, programming, and other services, across all learning scenarios (in person, hybrid, remote) when school opens in the fall.

Per the guidelines from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), “school districts must provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those individuals providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to students.” The guidelines prioritize in-person instruction as much as is possible for students with disabilities, particularly preschool-aged students and those with significant and complex needs while adhering to health and safety requirements. DESE has determined that students with complex and significant needs include: Students already identified as “high needs” through the IEP process on the IEP form entitled “Primary Disability/Level of Need-PL3.” Such students must meet at least two of these criteria:

services provided outside of the general education classroom; service providers are special education teachers and related service providers; special education services constitute more than 75% of the student’s school day; students who cannot engage in remote learning due to their disability-related needs; students who primarily used aided and augmentative communication; students who are homeless; students in foster care; students in congregate care; and/or students dually-identified as English Learners.

Parent outreach, including on-line and phone surveys as well as in-person meetings, was conducted in order to obtain parent input on the proposed learning models.

### **Delivery of IEP services**

**In-person learning.** IEP services will be fully implemented for those students receiving support in an inclusion or resource room setting abiding by social distancing and safety protocols in each building. These IEP services will be fully implemented for students who receive their instruction in our PASS, Discovery, Lifeskills, Connect, or BRIDGE classrooms; this student population is identified as “high needs” through the IEP process on the IEP form entitled “Primary Disability/Level of Need-PL3”, They

will remain in their program for the full day and receive all of their academic instruction by the special education teacher, educational assistants, and/or ABA techs. Given that remote learning is often more challenging for this population, the goal will be to provide in-person instruction, to the greatest extent possible. If this is not possible, in-person services for related therapies, social skills groups, or Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services will be provided on a part-time basis.

Students participating in our Work Experience Program for young adults ages 18-22 years old will attend in person to the greatest extent possible, however, due to constraints with community outings and participating in a variety of off-campus work sites, some remote and/or hybrid learning opportunities may be necessary based on the needs of the students.

**Remote Learning.** If in-person instruction cannot be provided and students with disabilities must receive instruction remotely in-full or in-part, these students “must receive special education instruction and related services necessary to provide FAPE through an Instruction and Services model of delivery.” The “Instruction and Services” model includes the following components:

1. A regular and consistent schedule of classes, interventions, services, and therapies as required by the student’s IEP, offered synchronously or asynchronously; attendance and participation will be monitored.
2. Structured learning time so the student can access state standards.
3. Frequent interactions with teachers and other staff members to ensure participation.
4. Synchronous remote lessons or teletherapy sessions may be provided via telephone or video conferencing as necessary.

For students receiving the majority of their daily instruction through special education, teachers and therapists will assign supplemental work (beyond lessons taught synchronously or asynchronously) during the school day that can be accomplished independently with guidance from and accountability to the teacher or therapist.

In order to support the required Instruction and Services, Southbridge will provide computers, iPads, and internet access for each student. Parent and educator training will be provided on the use of these devices, troubleshooting technical issues, expectations for structured learning time, and supporting students’ social/emotional needs. All printed materials and training will be offered in the parent’s primary language.

Accommodations, modifications, and/or services outlined in the student’s IEP may be provided differently in the remote environment. All changes will be documented in an individualized Distance Learning Plan and communicated to parents prior to the start of school. Related services will be provided either by Tele-therapy or Google Meeting sessions. Specialized instruction will be provided via Google Classroom-The DLP will include a detailed schedule of classes, interventions, services, and

therapies per the student's IEP.

Special Education teachers will be expected to communicate with parents on an on-going basis to provide information on schedule changes, academic progress, accommodations, etc. An individual Distance Learning Plan/Student Schedule will be provided to parents and students outlining the services, accommodations, and therapies and how they will be implemented.

**Hybrid Learning.** Education and services provided remotely via a hybrid learning model must follow the guidance provided in the section above on Remote Learning.

Students attending Southbridge Academy, the district's therapeutic day placement will begin the year with a hybrid learning model. Progress will be assessed monthly in order to gradually bring students back to an in-person learning experience. Given that remote learning is often more challenging for this population, part-time, in-person tutoring sessions will be offered to any student experiencing difficulties in addition to built-in office hours that teachers provide on a regular basis.

In-person services offered within the student's home or in a community-based setting, particularly for students with significant and complex needs, may also be considered as part of a hybrid model to ensure that as many services as possible are provided in-person instead of remotely.

IEP accommodations, modifications, and services may be provided in person or remotely, and this information will be documented in the DLP as well as communicated to the parent.

**Students attending Out of District Schools.** Students in Out of District Schools will continue to receive their services either remotely or in-person as directed by the individual schools. Southbridge will continue to receive remote learning plans and progress reports on all students as appropriate.

**Related Services (Speech, Occupational therapy, counseling, BCBA, and Physical Therapy).** Related service providers may need to enter the classrooms throughout the school day to provide services to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. Adherence to building social distancing/safety protocols will be in place in addition to the following:

1. Classroom assignments and service delivery schedules for students with disabilities will be developed so that they receive services consistent with their IEPs in the least restrictive environment, as defined in 603 CMR 28.02(12).
2. Based on the learning model, related services will be provided in-person or via Tele-therapy/Google Meets with adherence to social distancing and safety protocols.
3. Counselors, BCBAs, and school psychologists will continue to be available to support students. There will be protocols and guidelines in each school on how to access these supports.

**Initial Evaluations, Reevaluations, and IEP Team Meetings.** Southbridge will continue to use Google Meets option to conduct virtual/remote team meetings.

IEPs will be written as though the student will be attending school full time in-person; however, given the unpredictable nature of the COVID-19 virus, special education teachers and related service providers will be adaptable in their approach to the delivery of IEP services. Southbridge will continue to issue Progress Reports at least as often as report cards or progress reports are provided for students without disabilities (Special educators and service providers collect data and use data to monitor the student's progress in order to develop Progress Reports). IEP meetings will be held mainly remotely to limit the number of people in a building, but if necessary can be held in person following specific safety procedures at each school. Special Education teachers will contact the parents of their students by September 4, 2020, to discuss how a given student's IEP services will be delivered if different than described in a student's IEP. This communication will outline potential changes to how and where special education services will be provided. Special education teachers will provide parents with a written notification containing specific information about how IEP services will be provided within the first 2 weeks of school.

It is important to note that a change in the delivery of services due to a school's change in learning model, in-person, hybrid, or remote, as a result of COVID-19 does not result in a change in placement. The services outlined in the IEP remain and are considered "stay-put."

Initial and re-evaluations will continue to be provided in-person, on a 1:1 basis with the evaluator and evaluatee wearing the appropriate PPE (masks, face shields) and adherence to district social distancing and safety protocols.

**Staffing, Specialized Safety Supplies/Protective Equipment, and Training.** Due to the need to be closer than the minimum physical distancing requirements when instructing some students with disabilities, the Department recommends that school and district special education service providers follow the guidelines that the Center for Disease Control describes for "direct service providers". Direct service providers include direct support professionals, paraprofessionals/Educational Assistants, therapists, related services personnel, assistants, school nurses, health office staff, and any other staff who must come into close contact with students with disabilities.

Some students with disabilities will require unique supports that may make it less possible to practice physical distancing. In addition, some students with disabilities will not be able to wear cloth face masks as frequently or at all. In order to support such students safely, Southbridge will:

1. Provide educators who provide direct physical support to students with disabilities specific training on the use of the additional protective supplies they will need, including appropriately donning and doffing disposable gowns, face shields, etc.
2. Adequately staff classrooms, and in accordance with any approved student: licensed educator: aide ratios.
3. Consult with families and health providers to ensure the health and safety of our students.
4. Ensure all service providers adhere to the district/building protocols around safety, social

distancing, use of masks, handwashing, student cohorts, and cleaning procedures.

**Early Childhood Special Education and Preschool Children.** Southbridge is prioritizing in-person instruction for this age group but is prepared to adjust to hybrid or remote services if necessary.

Southbridge has been working with local Early Intervention Programs since the spring (YMCA, Head Start, and Kennedy Donovan Center) to conduct in-person play-based evaluations, remote IEP eligibility meetings, and proposing IEP services by the child's third birthday. Preschool-aged students with disabilities attending the Eastford Road School integrated preschool program will receive in-person learning to the greatest extent possible and IEP services will be fully implemented in their classroom setting. Early Intervention Transition meetings (90 days before 3rd birthday) will continue to be conducted virtually with parents, EI, and school staff as well as outside support agencies through Google Meets.

**Transportation.** Special education transportation safety protocols, for both in-district and out of district students, will be in collaboration with the District's transportation safety protocols. Adherence to mask-wearing, cleaning procedures, capacity limits and entry and exit procedures for the van or school bus will be in accordance with State and Federal Guidelines.

## **VII. Out of School Time**

### **Southbridge Public Schools 21<sup>st</sup> Century Program Fall Plan**

In an effort to align with district plans and the DESE initial guidelines for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Centers Programs we have developed the following plan for School Year 2020-2021.

#### **SPS 21<sup>st</sup> Century Program Tracks**

**Track 1.** This track will include in-person programming for elementary students in grades 2-5 four days a week. This model will provide programming for WSS students two days a week and CSS students two days a week. This will help the program follow the district's safety, hygiene/cleaning protocols, and social distancing guidelines of 6'.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Program will follow the district's hybrid approach for grades 6-9 in its middle school program. The hybrid model will provide programming for students in grades 6-9 two days a week during their in-person days (Monday/Tuesday for students in the Red cohort and Thursday/Friday for students in the White cohort). The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Program will also offer students a virtual tutoring session on Wednesday afternoons.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century in-person programs will utilize a parent pick-up model to assure there is ample time for buses to be sanitized for the next school day.

**Track 2.** SPS 21<sup>st</sup> Century Remote Learning Academy will be provided as an option for families of students in grades 2-9 whose preference is for students to remain home and participate in

online learning. This option will also be available for families who cannot attend the in-person program due to transportation or other circumstances.

## **VIII. Student Supports**

In 2018 Southbridge Public Schools was identified by the University of Connecticut's Center for Behavioral and Education Research as a National Demonstration District for PBIS 5. This partnership is built on the idea of developing school and district capacity around climate and culture. To date, all schools have implemented Tier I systems and strategies to ensure a positive learning environment, with three schools developing Tier II supports. This work continues to be the foundation of meeting all student's needs during this time of uncertainty and heightened anxiety.

The district developed a task force focused on Social Emotional Learning to plan for students' return to school, understanding that many children might need added support. The District Climate and Culture Coach is overseeing this group. This team is working with individual school PBIS teams, leaning on the PBIS structures that already exist in each school, to ensure safe and healthy teaching practices. This includes creating classroom and whole school matrices to address wearing masks, hand washing, and social distancing, to name a few. Lesson plans and professional development workshops are being created to teach the teachers these new procedures. The new systems will be shared with parents and taught to all students in the first few weeks of school.

Southbridge Public Schools has invested resources of time and money to support the social-emotional needs of our students. Between the 2020 and 2021 school years an additional School Adjustment Counselor (SAC) was added to the High School resulting in 13 full-time SAC positions district-wide. Each school is examining the roles and responsibilities of their School Adjustment Counselors knowing it is important to build relationships with all students. Lastly, the district adopted a new universal screening tool, to help identify students who might need a Tier II or Tier III social-emotional support. All district educators are committed to creating a safe, supportive learning environment for all students.

## **IX. Professional Learning**

The Receiver Superintendent made the decision to move the first day of school from August 24th to September 14th, allowing added days for staff professional development totaling 14 days (calendar in Appendix C). The teaching and learning task force broke into three subgroups including PreK-1, grades 2-5, and grades 6-12. When possible the district's technical assistance experts (The Hill For Literacy, Instructional Partners, & UConn) are embedded in each group. Each team is tasked with creating the structure of how instruction is delivered during the first 12 weeks of school for in-person and remote learning models. The teams will utilize the extra professional development days to share the grade-appropriate structure with teachers.

The district identified a number of mandated professional development opportunities to help prepare staff to teach students in-person and remotely. All teachers will participate in the following workshops:

1. Ready Learner One training focused on building and strengthening google classroom skills and other remote teaching strategies.
2. Curriculum specific content:
  - a. Elementary - Wonders, ReadyMath, PBIS classroom practices.
  - b. Secondary - Guidebooks, Illustrative Math, PBIS classroom practices, Science, Social Studies, etc.
3. Technology training including Aspen (gradebooks, attendance, journal), SWIS (discipline referrals).
4. PBIS health and safety protocols.
5. Student support including special education and section 504.

There is significant time allotted for staff to become comfortable with new classroom routines. These routines include breakfast and lunch in the classroom, accessing resources such as support staff or the nurse, as well as how to deliver curriculum and assess students in social distanced in-person and remote environments. Additionally, it is paramount that we focus on helping teachers develop strategies for building relationships with students in this nuanced learning environment. Lastly, time will be allotted for staff to reconnect with each other, re-establishing the learning community that was disrupted in the spring.

## **X. Plan Development**

Massachusetts has required districts to submit plans for three return to school scenarios: 1) a plan for in-person schooling 2) a hybrid model, in-person schooling coupled with remote learning, and 3) a plan for 100% remote learning. Each model was developed by analyzing multiple layers of data, problem-solving and collaborating, all under the umbrella of health and safety guidance from DESE (see Appendix D). The development of these plans have considered the following.

**Community Context.** It is important to understand the health context in Massachusetts, and more importantly, in Southbridge. The leadership team of the Southbridge Public Schools remains in contact with the Director of the Southbridge Board of Health and is regularly updated on the status of COVID-19 in the town of Southbridge. At this time we know the following, including that the overall trajectory of COVID-19 incidences in Southbridge is following the same pattern in Massachusetts.

1. The town of Southbridge is following the state of Massachusetts's reopening plan and is currently in Phase 3.
2. The number of positive COVID-19 cases in Southbridge has decreased from 7-10 in April down to 2-4 cases per week currently (August). It is important to note, many of the cases in Southbridge

resulted from an outbreak in the local rehabilitation center.

3. As of July 21<sup>st</sup>, Southbridge had 170 cases of COVID-19, 146 patients recovered, 10 have died, and 14 cases remain active cases as of July 24, 2020.
4. As you can see from the data table below, the incidences of COVID-19 in Southbridge is consistently lower than that of the state.

Percentage is the number of confirmed cases based on total population April 1, 2020 – August 1, 2020									
	April 1	April 15	May 1	May 15	June 1	June 15	July 1	July 15	Aug. 1
State	0.11%	0.43%	0.92%	1.19%	1.44%	1.51%	1.56%	1.66%	1.75%
Southbridge	0.05%	0.19%	0.35%	0.53%	0.68%	0.82%	0.91%	0.93%	1.05%

**Health and Safety Guidance.** The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education supplied specific health and safety guidelines that were followed in crafting our reopening plans (Appendix D). Southbridge Public School administrators chose to adopt the guidelines as prescribed, and in some instances, added increased safety protocols. Below outlines the district’s requirements for in-person learning.

**Feasibility Study.** Southbridge Public Schools student enrollment is 1987 with the breakdown of enrollment numbers by school is outlined below (details found in Appendix B).

Student Enrollment by School Total Enrollment 1987 (This information is approximate)					
Eastford Road (PreK-2)	Charlton Street (grades 2-5)	West Street (grades 2-5)	Southbridge Academy (grades 6-12)	Southbridge Middle (grades 6-8)	Southbridge High (grades 9-12)
492	275	313	60	416	431

The goal of the feasibility study was to understand how many students in each school and classroom could safely fit when considering both a three-foot physical distance and a six-foot physical distance requirement. The data analysis highlighted that with 3’ physical distancing all students k-12 could be invited back for in-person schooling. The elementary data suggests that each building could bring 100% of students back in the building with 6’ physical distance if additional classroom space is identified. With the 6’ physical distancing option only 50% of the students, in the secondary level (grades 6-12), could be in the building at

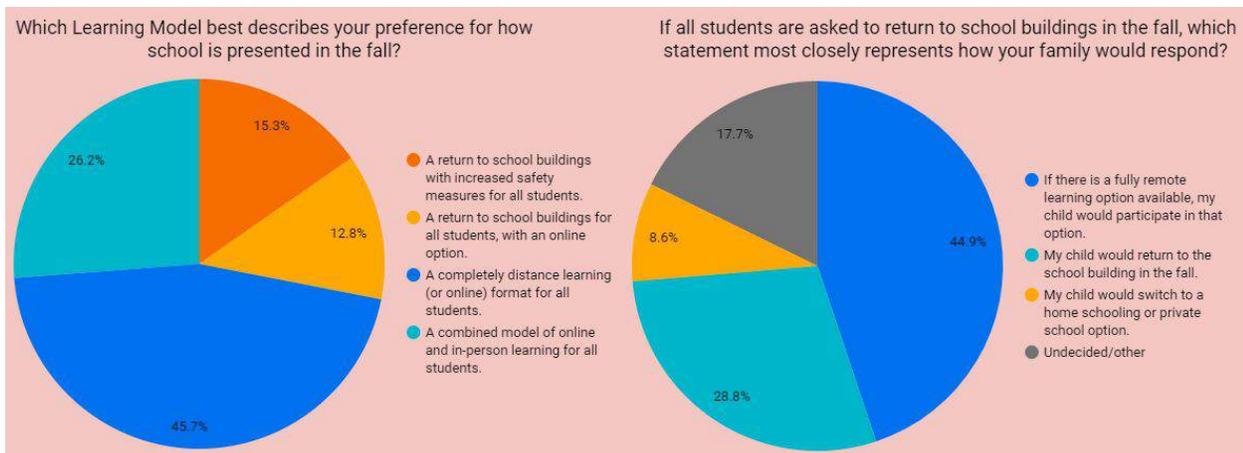
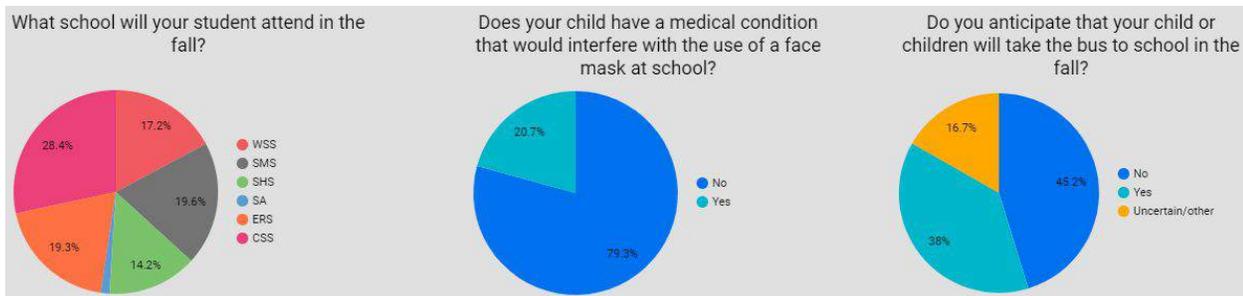
the same time and meet the safety regulations.

## Analysis of Facilities

**Analysis of Transportation.** Southbridge utilizes AA Transportation to provide bussing for students. AA has a fleet of 21 buses available to service Southbridge each with a 71 student capacity. Based on DESE guidance due to COVID-19, each bus must limit the number of passengers to 23. Southbridge inquired regarding the availability of additional busses to address the capacity issue and was informed additional buses were not possible.

Southbridge Middle High School is located in a remote part of town and does not allow for a safe walking route to school. Additionally, poverty and many related challenges severely impact the ability of many families to transport their children to and from school. These challenges led to transportation as a significant factor in determining the model of school reopening.

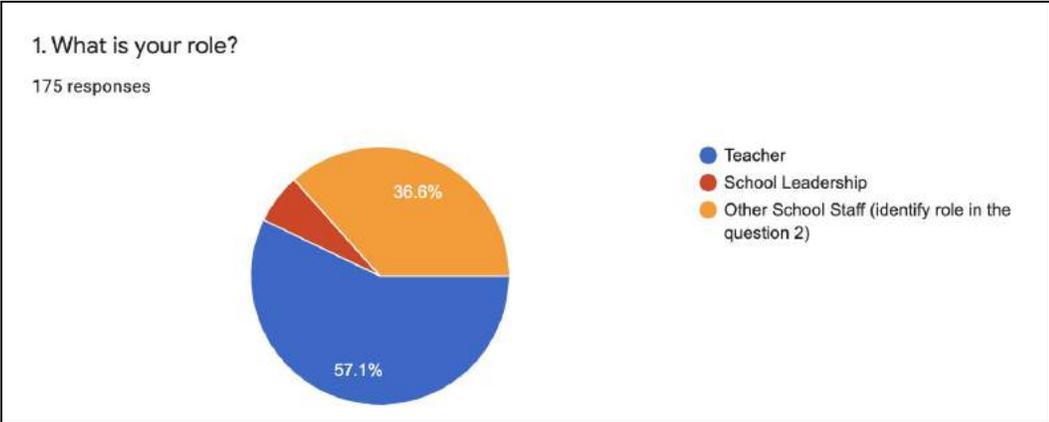
**Parent Preference.** Southbridge Public Schools believes our parents and families are valuable partners in the education of their children and having their input while planning is paramount. To this end, a six question survey was developed. The survey was announced over our One Call system, made available on the district website and blog. Additionally, District Family Liaisons reached out to families to maximize participation. As of July 24<sup>th</sup>, 797 families participated in the survey resulting in over 50% of our district families participating. The data collected is shared below:



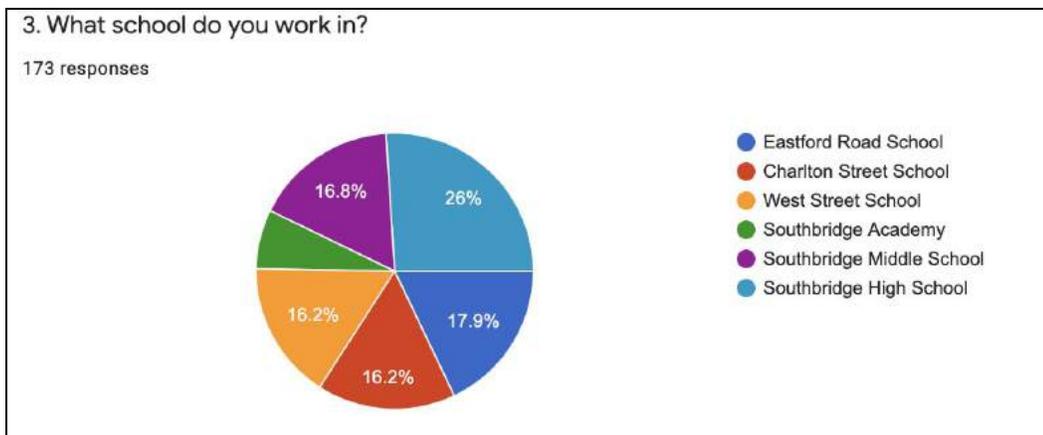
In summary, consistently across the survey, 45% of families prefer a completely distanced or online learning format if the option is made available. Of the families who are comfortable with coming back to school in the fall (28%), 12% of them would prefer an online option to be made available.

**Staff Perspective.** The Southbridge Public Schools is committed to maintaining a healthy and safe environment for all staff. A survey was developed and made available to all educators in the district (Appendix F). Additionally, the Southbridge Education Association (SEA) shared a survey that they conducted for their members. The SEA survey consisted of 152 responses representing Educational Assistants and Teachers with no more than 23% of any particular building represented. Approximately 62% of the respondents indicated they were least comfortable with a full return to in-person learning and greater than 70% of respondents indicated moderate to most comfort with a hybrid model of learning. Approximately 40% of the respondents were most comfortable with full remote learning.

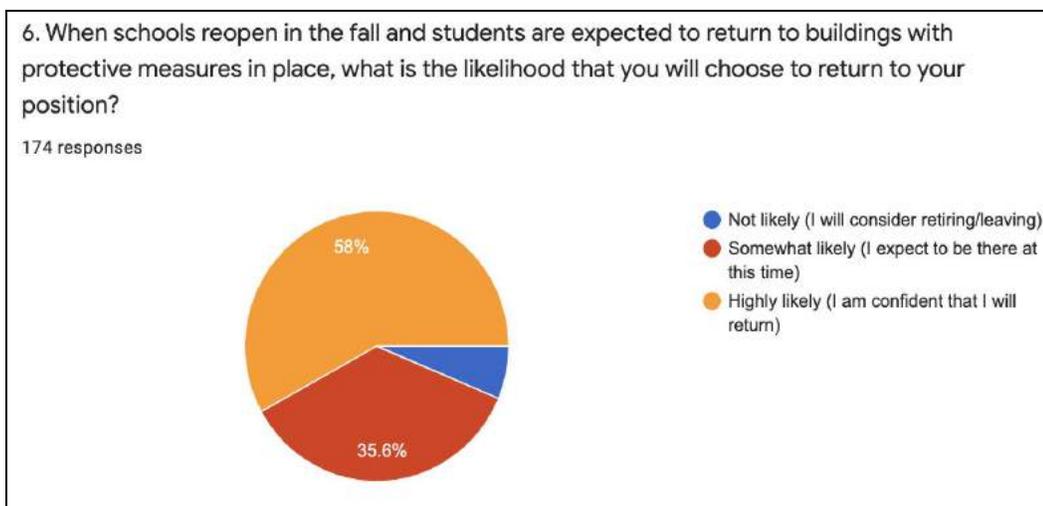
The analysis of the district survey indicated as of July 24<sup>th</sup> 176 employees, including Teachers, Educational Assistants, Nurses, Adjustment Counselors, Food Service employees, Secretaries, Administrators and others. The graphic below shows that 57% of the respondents are teachers, 36% are administrators and 6% are other staff.



There is a representation of staff from each school, with 49% participation from the elementary schools and 49.7% from the secondary schools as evidenced by the following graphic.



Question #6 asks staff their likelihood of returning to their positions if all recommended guidance is followed. The graphic below shows that 58% of staff who participated in the survey are “Highly likely (I am confident that I will return)” and 35.6% are “somewhat likely (I expect to be there at this time)”, a combination of 93.6% of the staff participants most likely returning to work. Eleven participants (6.3%) stated “Not Likely (I will consider retiring/leaving)”.



## XI. Planning Teams

A district-wide task force was formed including principals and administrators (Appendix A) and an action plan was developed for the district and schools to use as a guide in the planning process. Each school’s action planning document will be the foundation of the individual school plan that will be shared with teachers, families, and community members. A graphic describing the planning teams and a full list of staff involved in school-based planning can be found in Appendix G.

## XII. Needed Resources

Regardless of which plan or combination of plans is recommended for the fall, it is clear that without additional resources Southbridge Public Schools cannot implement any plan safely or effectively. This section will outline additional resources necessary and identifies staff that are being hired.

**Health and Safety Items.** The district placed orders for the DESE recommended a number of masks, pairs of gloves, hand sanitizer, and other PPEs. In addition, N95/KN95 masks are being sourced and ordered. Below is an itemized listing of PPE orders.

3 MONTH SUPPLY OF PPEs (required by DESE)	
Item	Number ordered
Medical Masks	26,000
Pairs of Gloves	25,000
N95 Masks	5,000
Hand Sanitizer	648 Gallons, dispensers & supply of hand sanitizer for the dispensers
Eye Protection	130
Face Shields	130
Disposable Gowns	800

**Technology.** Southbridge Public Schools submitted an order for 1706 chrome book computers and DESE donated an additional 150) to provide students in kindergarten through grade 12 with the necessary technology to engage in learning at school and, when necessary, at home. Additionally, 400 WIFI hotspots were ordered to ensure all students have the ability to access the internet and connect to school when working remotely at home. Audio and video equipment have also been ordered to support the possibility of students learning remotely synchronously.

**Food Service.** Additional equipment will be necessary to provide meals to students in classrooms. These items include carts, coolers, additional paper products, and garbage cans.

**Staffing.** The following positions are important additions to our reopening plan.

The *District Health & Safety Coordinator* was hired to ensure that policies and procedures are followed carefully. She is a registered nurse to support health and safety needs in all buildings. She will be available throughout the fall and be responsive to the building staff and student health needs.

*Nurses Aids* to assist in the monitoring of student wellness. There will be one Nurses Aid per school (6)

Additional *Maintenance Staff* to aid in cleaning and disinfecting the buildings. The district will add cleaning staff up to 13 (and or contract with a cleaning company) to increase the number of staff present during each school day to clean and disinfect all frequently-touched surfaces regularly (doorknobs, railings, etc). Each night buildings will also be sanitized utilizing tools such as electrostatic sprayers.

A *Technical Facilitator* will be hired to support students and faculty in the Remote Learning Academy.

*Bus Monitors* will be hired (up to 21) to manage the new health and safety protocols specific to transportation in order to help ensure the safety of students on the bus.

Additional *Educators*, whether teachers or educational assistants, are necessary to support in-person schooling with 6' physical distancing and smaller class size.

### **XIII. Summary of Findings**

Once the health context of the opening of schools was obtained, copious review of DESE's guidance was completed, the feasibility report analyzed, and an understanding of family and staff's perspectives was grasped, it was determined that Southbridge could return all elementary-aged students to in-person schooling in the fall while adhering to all established safety protocols and procedures (at 6 feet of social distance) with a high level of fidelity. In contrast, the return of all secondary aged students to in-person school with the same level of adherence to safety protocols and procedures does not appear to be viable. The study identified considerable difficulties with the transportation of secondary-aged students due to both the inability to add buses, and the geographic location of the school which eliminates the ability of students to walk. The consumption of breakfast and lunch in the physical space are also current significant challenges when considering the full attendance of all secondary-aged students. The larger class size of the secondary schools does not allow for the required 6 feet of physical distance necessary for meal consumption. Finally, survey data also indicated that a significant portion of families are not comfortable returning their students to in-person school. The conclusion of this study was the understanding that we would need to provide some families with a complete remote option and that we would need to create a hybrid secondary school model in order to ensure that our most high needs students (elementary-aged and vulnerable populations) were able to return to in-person schooling.

# TYPES OF PLANS CONSIDERED

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requires each school district to create three reopening models including; in-person, hybrid, and remote learning opportunities. Outlined below is each plan. The plan which was ultimately decided upon combined the best elements of the in-person learning Model with the best elements of the Hybrid model and was previously outlined at the beginning of this document.

## I. Track 1: In-Person Learning Model

Students receive in-person instruction full time in school environments that have been appropriately modified to address health and safety requirements issued by DESE.

Although school might look and feel different for students in the fall, the underpinnings will remain the same. Educators are committed to supporting your child's academic development with a keen focus on ELA and Math. Our Academic technical support partners, The Hill for Literacy (K-5) and Instructional Partners (6-12) are committed to working with our administrators and teachers to build and strengthen their pedagogy. The climate and culture work through our PBIS initiative is paramount and will be strengthened with the ongoing support from the University of Connecticut's technical support team. All educators in Southbridge Public Schools are determined to continue the forward momentum that was started over the past couple of years.

### Elementary (grades PreK - 5)

The feasibility study revealed that with added classrooms and educators all Southbridge Public School elementary students could return to school for 5 days a week in the fall. With additional classroom space identified and educators hired, all classrooms will adhere to 6' physical distancing as well as have hand sanitizer and/or sinks with soap available. All staff will be expected to wear masks. Students in PreK - 1<sup>st</sup> grade will be encouraged to wear masks and students enrolled in grades 2-5 will be required to wear them. Masks will be provided as needed. The following applies to this model.

The class size will be smaller. The average elementary class size for the previous school was approximately 17. In order to maintain 6' physical distance, most elementary class sizes will be reduced by several students. This requires the district to add grade level classrooms and hire additional staff.

Movement in the building and transitions will be limited to prevent students from breaking the 6' physical distancing rule.

- a. Art and Music curriculum will be delivered in the grade-level classrooms
- b. Breakfast and Lunch will be served in the classroom

- c. Arrival and dismissal procedures will be changed
- d. Bathroom and nurse visit processes will be adjusted and taught to all students

Physical Education classes will be developed to ensure adherence to all the safety precautions and will occur outside whenever possible

Increased movement breaks. In order to allow students to physically move and have the opportunity for multiple “mask free” times, students will have frequent opportunities to be outside, without a mask but adhering to physically distancing. These will be short periods of time scheduled throughout the day

Students will be taught PBIS lessons on mask-wearing, physical distancing, transitioning, bathroom procedures, and visiting the nurse.

Guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recommends no outside visitors or volunteers except for the purpose of contracted service providers for the purpose of special education. A log of all visitors will be kept and maintained for 30 days.

### **Secondary (grades 6-12)**

The feasibility study revealed that all Southbridge Public Schools secondary students could return to school for 5 days a week in the fall. All classrooms will adhere to 3' physical distancing, have hand sanitizer and/or sinks with soap available. All staff will be expected to wear masks. All students in grades 6-12 will be required to wear a mask. Masks will be provided as needed. As an extra safety precaution, each student will have a sneeze guard on their work surface. The following applies to this model.

1. Students in grades 6-10 will be organized in cohorts. This means students will be grouped with the same peers for all classes throughout the day. This is done to help minimize the mixing of students and for easier contact tracing.
2. Band, Chorus, and Physical Education will be rethought to ensure adherence to all the safety precautions. Classes may be held outside whenever possible
3. Movement in the building and transitions:
  - a. Grade 9 and 10 students will transition on a separate bell schedule from the 11th and 12th graders.
  - b. All students will transition between classes by maintaining physical distancing and following the traffic patterns taught and outlined on the floor.
  - c. Breakfast and Lunch will be held in classrooms, with 3' physical distancing, or outside.
  - d. Arrival and dismissal procedures will be changed.
  - e. Bathroom and nurse visit processes will be adjusted and taught to all students.

4. Safe mask-free times will be scheduled throughout the day.
5. Students will be taught PBIS lessons on mask-wearing, physical distancing, transitioning, bathroom procedures, visiting the nurse, etc.
6. The length of the school day will be impacted due to the limitations of transportation. Some students will arrive at school at the normal arrival time but will be dismissed early. Other students will arrive in the 2nd arrival time and be dismissed at the original dismissal time.
7. Guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recommends no outside visitors or volunteers except for the purpose of contracted service providers for the purpose of special education. A log of all visitors will be kept and maintained for 30 days.

## **II. Track 2: Hybrid Learning Model**

In a hybrid model, students alternate between in-person learning with strict safety requirements and remote learning.

Students receiving special education services, and students identified as high needs will be encouraged to attend school in-person five days per week.

### **Elementary and Secondary**

Seeking to reduce the number of students in the classrooms, the hybrid model calls for students to attend in-person school two days per week and remote three days. Students are divided into two cohorts, Red and White. Whenever possible, siblings will be placed in the same color cohort. In this model, 50% of students (Red) attend school on Monday and Tuesday and participate remotely Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. The other 50% (White) attend school remotely Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and attend in-person Thursday and Friday. Remote Learning will consist of both synchronous and asynchronous academic activities and students will work remotely with content area teachers. Attendance will be taken in each class and all course work will be graded. Students with special needs will have a customized learning plan based upon the demands of their Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). All enrolled students will be assigned a Chromebook. Students will be expected to care for their Chromebook and bring it to and from school fully charged each day. Teachers will use Chromebooks to enhance their daily lessons.

<b>Hybrid Learning Model</b>				
<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
Red Group In-Person	Red Group In-Person	All students Remote	White Group In-Person	White Group In-Person

**Hybrid In-Person Learning Days.** Students scheduled to attend in-person school will follow their schedule. Typical procedures including grading, attendance, and discipline will be followed. Details are outlined above in the In-Person Learning Model with a few differences. First, elementary classrooms will have fewer students, no new classrooms will be created, and no additional teaching staff will be hired. Second, the secondary schools will adhere to the 6’ social distancing resulting in smaller class sizes, averaging around twelve students. And last, in both the elementary and secondary schools, days would not need to be shortened as extensively due to fewer bus arrival and dismissal times. This is a natural result of having fewer students riding the bus each day, as 50% of students will be remaining home, working remotely.

**Hybrid Remote Learning Days.** When students are scheduled to remain home and participate in schooling remotely, they will have synchronous and asynchronous academic assignments. Remote learning days will be treated the same as in-person including daily/class attendance, work completion, and grading. New remote learning behavioral expectations will be developed, taught, and implemented. PBIS strategies will be employed and when needed, negative behavioral choices will be addressed with discipline.

**III. Track 3: Remote Learning Model**

The Remote Learning Academy is designed to support all students if/when COVID 19 circumstances require the school or district to cease in-person learning.

1. In this learning model, remote learning is the default mode of instruction for all students, though some high needs students may still be served in-person full time or through a hybrid model. Structured Learning Time requirements apply to remote learning.
2. All students enrolled will be assigned a Chromebook, and those students who do not have access to the internet will receive a WIFI hotspot.
3. The district is utilizing Google Classroom as the learning management tool.

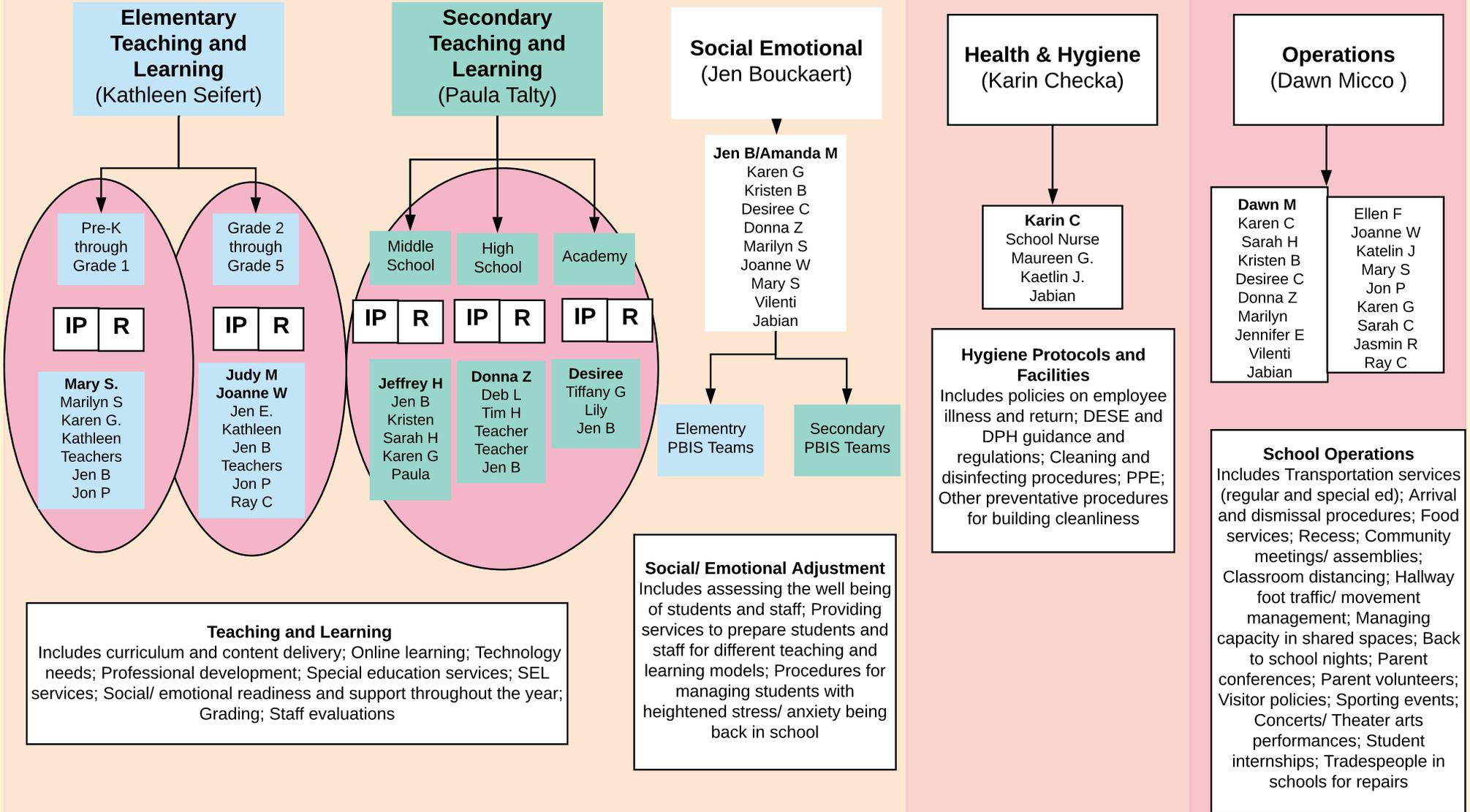
4. Students will receive scheduled times to attend class remotely. Attendance and grading will be expected just as in in-person learning.
5. The district has implemented the Aspen student information system Family Portal to allow families to stay engaged in the learning of their children remotely. The portal grants parents the ability to see a student's academic progress.

# Appendix

## Appendix A: District-and School-Based Task Force and Participants

# District Covid19 Task Force

Maureen Gullekson, Desiree Chumsantivut, Dawn Micco, Jennifer Bouckaert, Jeffrey Villar, Joanne Wilson, Karen Giangregorio, Meredith Derian-Toth, Margo Ferrick, Paula Talty, Sarah Champagne, Jeff House, Judy Maisonet, Jonathan Parent, Karin Checka, Kathleen Seifert, Michael Comeau, Mary Skrzypczak



**Teaching and Learning**  
Includes curriculum and content delivery; Online learning; Technology needs; Professional development; Special education services; SEL services; Social/ emotional readiness and support throughout the year; Grading; Staff evaluations

**Social/ Emotional Adjustment**  
Includes assessing the well being of students and staff; Providing services to prepare students and staff for different teaching and learning models; Procedures for managing students with heightened stress/ anxiety being back in school

**Hygiene Protocols and Facilities**  
Includes policies on employee illness and return; DESE and DPH guidance and regulations; Cleaning and disinfecting procedures; PPE; Other preventative procedures for building cleanliness

**School Operations**  
Includes Transportation services (regular and special ed); Arrival and dismissal procedures; Food services; Recess; Community meetings/ assemblies; Classroom distancing; Hallway foot traffic/ movement management; Managing capacity in shared spaces; Back to school nights; Parent conferences; Parent volunteers; Visitor policies; Sporting events; Concerts/ Theater arts performances; Student internships; Tradespeople in schools for repairs

**School-Based COVID Task Force Employee Participants**

Subgroup	Eastford Road	Charlton Street	West Street	Southbridge Middle School	Southbridge Academy	Southbridge High School
<b>Teaching and Learning</b>	Mary Skrzypczak Kaitlin Thibodeau D. Peguero Emily Callanan Emily Roche Jen Ladner Julie Robb Kathleen Siefert Maureen Bonner Rebecca Trahan Marilyn Stella Kathleen Seifert	Judy Maisonet Vilenti Tulloch Raymond Cooper Robyn Krapf Deb Morrill Jen Cowles Andrea Cropley Elias Nasis Elizabeth O'Doherty Victoria McGinness Heather Mydlarz Brigitte Cassell PBIS team	Joanne Wilson Katelin Jacobs Tim Smolen Linda Mathieu Cathy Schofield Dana Juozaitis Sue McDowell Johana Vargas Lynn Morin John Hill Yarelis Marquez Cindy Payne Mario Maturi Melissa Weinheimer Amy Mehlmann Kim Fallon Cindy Keane Erica Tetreault	Jeff House Kristen Beckford Sarah Houle Laura Teczar Stefania Khoda Kayla Lyons Jillian Lombardi Katherine Hatch	Tiffany Greaney Desiree Chumsantivut James Murray Ana Marcelo Sarah Fox	Paula Talty Margo Ferrick Deb Langois Dawn Micco Amanda Miser Aaron Couture Donna Zannelli Tim Hippert Becky Winans Jen Bouchaert Mitch Hughes Dave Burris William Kroeger Robert Siciliano Hannah Lafleur Allison Barbieri Luci Gonzalez Sheila Jalbert Patricia Dargie
<b>Operations</b>	Michelle Driscoll Lynn Cote Lisa Bachand Mary Skrzypczak Marilyn Stella Karina Alvarado Maureen Bonner Julie Robb Gina Yacavacce Gayle Howland Kaitlin Thibodeau Karen Krasinski Margaret O'Brien Reeva Bagley			Jeff House Kristen Beckford Jabian Gutierrez Sarah Houle Dawn Micco Lauren Horsfield	Desiree Chumsantivut Tiffany Greaney Al Richards	
<b>PBIS/ SEL</b>	Marilyn Stella Kathleen Seifert Derid Peguero Jennifer Ladner Jessica Wilson			Jeff House Jabian Gutierrez Lauren Horsfield Rebecca Mclver Kayla Latham	Lily Perez Todd Salmonsens Ana Marcelo Alisha Schutrick Al Richards	

	Kaitlin Thibodeau Michelle Driscoll Margaret O'Brien Kathleen Seifert Angela Gonzalez Rivera Areilis Montes Emily Roche			Vanessa Davis Stefania Khoda Scot Palmerino Mike Wood Katherine Hatch	Meaghan Prince James Murray Desiree Chumsantivut Tiffany Greaney	
<b>Hygiene</b>				Jen Lynch Jeff House Kristen Beckford Jabian Gutierrez Sarah Houle Lauren Horsfield	Jeff House Jabian Gutierrez Jen Lynch	

## **Appendix B: District Feasibility Study**

<b>CHARLTON STREET SCHOOL</b>					
<b>Room #</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Grade/Content</b>	<b>Highest enroll. #</b>	<b># seats at 3' distance</b>	<b># of seats 6'</b>
106	Literacy Closet			36/3	14/2
107	Jen Cowles	Sped Office		13/3	7/1
108	Cara Sheedy	Adjustment Counselor		13/3	7/1
110	Kristna Pappas	Adjustment Counselor		13/3	7/1
111	Kathleen Breault	Psychogist		13/3	7/1
112	Andrea Cropley	Special Education		13/3	7/1
113	Christopher Rubenacker	Music		36/3	16/2
123	Robyn Krapf	Coach		3/1	2/1
124	Library			114/3	49/2
126	Elias Nasis	Technology Lab		12/1	
128	Heather Mydlarz	Grade 3	22	33/3	14/2
129	Lisa Ricci	Grade 3	21	33/3	14/2
130	Melanie Rubenacker	Grade 3	20	33/3	14/2
131	School Store			33/3	14/2
145	Jacqueline Croteau	Grade 2	15	32/3	14/2
146	Melyssa Cournoyer	Grade 2	14	32/3	14/2
147	Susan Pontbriand	Grade 2	15	32/3	14/2
148	Science Lab	All		32/3	14/2
CAFE				132/3	54/2
143	Norman Proulx	Special Education		33/3	13/2
144	Richard Alcantara	ESL		33/3	13/2
167	Deanna Elston	PASS	9	43/3	16/2
168	Kathy King- Guerra	Discovery	9	43/3	16/2
205	Leslie Hoffman	BCBA office		22/3	10/2
207	Lisa Diamond- Rutt	PASS	11	17/3	7/2
209	Edy McAndrews	k		17/3	7/2
211		OT/PT		22/3	10/2
219	Margaret Sbordy	Grade 4	20	33/3	14/2

220	Marcy Schefflar	Special Education		33/3	14/2
222	Lindsey Butkiewicz	Grade 4	16	33/3	14/2
223	Ibolya Toth	Grade 4	19	33/3	14/2
226	Audrey Williams	ESL		45/3	18/2
227	Vilenti Tulloch	Dean Office		45/3	18/2
229	Edy McAndrews	Art		33/3	12/2
230	Darwin Petras	Grade 5	16	33/3	12/2
232	Cynthia Rusakovich	Grade 5	17	33/3	12/2
233	Jennifer Townley	Grade 5	17	33/3	12/2

EASTFORD ROAD SCHOOL							
Room #	Teacher	Grade/Content	Highest enroll. #	# seats at 3' distance with existing furniture	# of seats 6'	Alternate options Room Size	3' Max capacity
136	Hamel	Kindergarten	17	need 12 traps	12/3	22' x 40'	35/3
142	Hamel	Kindergarten		need 12 traps	12/3	22' x 40'	35/3
145	Padilla	DL Kindergarten	19	need 20 traps	20/3	33'8" x 37'6"	46/3
148	Plesh (Raymond)	Kindergarten	20	have 10 need 10 traps	20/3	33'8" x 37'6"	46/3
113	Bonner	Kindergarten	15	need 18 traps	18/3	30'8" x 39'6"	50/3
114	Bonaventura	Kindergarten	16	need 18 traps	18/3	31' x 39'7"	51/3
122	Tetreault	Kindergarten	16	need 18 traps	18/3	30'8" x 39'6"	50/3
123	Trahan	Kindergarten	16	need 18 traps	18/3	31' x 39'7"	51/3
125	Benbenek	Kindergarten	16	have 13 4' tables	13/3	29' x 29'6"	33/3
126	Hyde/PASS	K/1	13	have 13 4' tables	13/3	29' x 29'6"	33/3
128	ELL			?	5/3	15'8" x 29'6"	15/3
138	Howland/Wayman	Library	30	need 30	30/3	19' x 90' total	69/3 with desks
221	Sullivan	Speech		2 sm rounds	5/1	14'2" x 22'8"	10/3
223	Roche (Rivers)	Grade 1	21	have 12 desks	12/3	22'8" x 37'8"	32/3
226	Roche (Peguero)	Grade 1		have 12 desks	12/3	22'8" x 37'8"	32/3
222	Thibodeau	Grade 1	21	have 12 desks	12/3	22' x 40'6"	35/3
227	Thibodeau	Grade 1		have 12 desks	12/3	22' x 40'6"	35/3
230	Piche	DL Grade 1	21	trapezoids	20/3	33'8" x 37'6"	46/3
233	Torres	DL Grade 1	21	trapezoids	20/3	33'8" x 37'6"	46/3
209	Brunsell	Grade 1	13	trapezoids	13/3	28'8" x 30'10"	32/3
208	Pena	Grade 1	21	rectangles	13/3	29'2" x 31'2"	36/3
211	(Callanan)Bailey-Gates	Grade 1	13	trapezoids	13/3	28'8" x 30'10"	32/3
212	Pena	DL Grade 1		rectangles	13/3	29'2" x 31'2"	36/3
216	Robb	Grade 1	21	rectangles	13/3	29' x 29'6"	33/3
217	Robb	Grade 1		trapezoids	13/3	29' x 29'6"	33/3
218	Scappaticci	Special Education		need desks	7/1	15'8" x 29'6"	15/3
207	Ladner/Rivers			Adults Only	7/1	15'4" x 30'10"	15/3
214	Driscoll	Social Skills			7/1	15'4" x 30'10"	15/3
206		Data Room		Adults Only	7/1	15'3" x 30'10"	-----

213	Aucoin/Peguero	School Store			7/1	15'4" x 30'10"	15/3
202		Workroom		Adults Only		12'8" x 25'6"	
201		Teacher's Lounge	have 6 4' tables		8	20'6" x 25'6"	
134		Gym/Cafeteria			42/3	39' x 60'	102/3 with desks
311		COVID Room		Adults Only			
	Admin/Offices						
102	Stella- AP	AP					
103	Driscoll	SAC					
104	Skrzypczak	Principal					
109	Bachand	Nurse				13'7" x 25'9"	
			330				

<b>SOUTHBIDGE ACADEMY</b>				
<b>Room #</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Grade/Content</b>	<b>Highest enroll. #</b>	<b># of seats 6'</b>
C115	Teachers Lounge			25/3
C113	office			7/3
art storage	storage			5/1
116	not assigned			12/3
117/B	conference room			9/3
C117	planning center			6/3
117C	counselors office			3/1
117D	seo office			3/1
C218	science Stewart	9-12 Sci	11	18/3
C219	ELA Fox	9-12 ELA	11	6/3
C225				6/3
C220	history Murray	9-12 Hist	11	11/3
C224	math Tilton	9-12 Math	11	13/3
C223	pull out room			9/3
C222	Resource Room			15/3
C221	Student Study Lounge			15/3
Principal	Chumsantivut			5/1
General Office	Martinez			5/1
Asst. Princ	Giangregorio			3/1
A	kitchen			2/1
B	file room			2/1
Teachers Room	Head Start space			9/1
104	Head Start space			8/1
103	Head Start space			5/1
102	Seifert			8/1
101	Roberts			9/1
100	math TBD	6-8 Math	9	15/3
Nurses Suite	McCullough			12/1
Supply Storge	copy room			8/1

C	science Keppler	6-8 Sci	9	5/1
D				5/1
M3	Planning Center			5/1
M4	SEO offices			5/1
E	Files-storage			11/3
F	IT-storage			3/1
M114	ELA Bowden	6-8 ELA	9	9/1

<b>SOUTHBRIDGE HIGH SHCOOL</b>								
<b>Room #</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Grade/Content</b>	<b>Highest enroll. #</b>	<b># seats at 3' distance</b>	<b># of seats 4'</b>	<b># of seats 5'</b>	<b># of seats 6'</b>	<b>square footage</b>
230	Kroeger	10, 11/ELA	23	24				756
231	Gonzalez	11,12/ ELA	23	24				756
232	Rivera	9/ELA	23	24				756
233	Langlois	9-12/ELA	23	24				780
234	Landine	10-12/ELA	23	24				756
235	Hippert	10-12/Science	23	19 desks plus tables				science
236	Bowliln	12/Spec Ed	8	10				375 special ed
249	Hayes	9/Spec Ed	8	14				425 special ed
250	Science, TBA	9, 10/Science	23	19 desks plus tables				science
251	Heaney	9-12/Per Finance	23	24				729
252	Hodgerney	10-12/History	23	24				780
253	Huges	9--12/History	23	24 desk/chair comb				756
254	Jalbert	10, 11-History	23	24				783
255	Siciliano	10-12, History	23	24 desk/chair comb				783
330			23					756
331	UA, TBA	9-12/tech arts	23	24				756
332	WL, TBA	9/Spanish 1	23	24				756
333	Vasquez	10-12/Spanish	23	24				780
334	Hernandez	9-12/Spanish	23	24				756
335	Aldrich	10-12/Science	23	19 desks plus tables				science
336	McNeil	10/Spec Ed	8	10				375 special ed
349	Valinski	11/Spec Ed	8	14				425 special ed
350	Mulcahy	11,12/Science	23	19 desks plus tables				science
351	Colello	9-12/Math	23	24				729
352	Figueroa	10/Math	23	24				780
353	Knight	9/Math	23	24 desk/chair comb				756
354	Math, TBA	11,12/Math	23	24				783
355	Horgan/Wessling Share	ELL	23	23				725
326			23					725 offices
327	Mastri	Bridge						748
136	Tarantino	Life Skills						


<b>SOUTHBRIDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL</b>						
<b>Room #</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Grade/Content</b>	<b>Highest enroll. #</b>	<b># seats at 3' distance</b>	<b># of seats 6'</b>	<b>Square footage</b>
100	Hatch, Catherine	8/ELA	24	24		728
101	Fournie, Meaghin	8/ELA	24	24		756
102	Pierce, Richard (Steve)	8/ESL	13	24		756
103	Khoda, Stefania	8/SCI	24	12 tables		924 science
104	Horsefield, Lauren	8/SS	24	22		728
105	McDonald, Anthony	8/MATH	24	12 tables		924 science
106	Batisa, Phillip	8/MATH	24	24		756
107	Dyer, Lisa	8/INTERV	13	24		756
108	SSC, Cepeda, Kamara, Palmeri	6-8/SSC	24	20 with 2 teacher		756 SSC
109	McEachern, Claire	8/SPED	13	10		384 special ed
115	Gutierrez, Jabian	8/ Asst. Prin	N/A			416 jabian's office
123	Francois, Daniel	6-8/Chorus	25			
149	LaFleur, Hannah	6-8/Band	16			
146	Maldonado, Luis	6-8/Music	24			
200	TBH, ELA	7/ELA	25	24		728
201	Mclver, Rebecca	7/ELA	23	24		756
202	Davis, Vanessa	7/ESL	13	24		756
203	March, James	7/SCI	25	12 tables		924 science
204	Buccini, Paul	7/SS	25	22		728
205	Whitney, Brand	6-8/STEM	25	12 tables		924 science
206	Clark, Katie	7/INTERV	13	24		756
207	TBH-MATH	7/MATH	24	24		756
208	Wood, Mike	7/MATH	25	20 with 2 teacher		756 SSC
209	Mero, Tara	7-SPED	10	10		384 special ed
215				13		416 specialist room
300	Hanlan, Janet	6/ELA	21	24		728
301	Teczar, Laura	6/ELA	22	24		756
302	Croce (Scott), Alisa	6/ESL	15	24		756
303	Lombardi, Jillian	6/SCI	22	12 tables		924 science

304	Latham (Lyons), Kayla	6/SS	22	22		728
305	Sanchez, Arleni	6-8/Art	25	12 tables		924 science
306	Yoder, Samuel	6-8/UASS	25	24		756
307	Hebert, Maria	6/MATH	22	24		756
308	TBH-Math	6/MATH	22	20 with 2 teacher		756 SSC
309	LaRochelle, Julie	6/SPED	13	10		384 special ed
315	TBH - Interventionist	6/INTERV	13	13		416 specialist room

WEST STREET SCHOOL							
Room #	Teacher	Grade/Content	Highest enroll. #	# seats at 3' distance	# seats at 6"	# seats at 5'	# seats at 4"
112	Santiago	Grade 2	18	32/3 & 17/3	16/2 & 6/2	22/2 & 8/2	28/2 & 10/2
114	Juozaitis	Grade 2	18	36/3	14/2	18/2	25/2
115	Tetreault	Grade 2	18	36/3	14/2	18/2	25/2
116	Luna	Grade 2 Dual	13	41/3	16/2	22/2	28/2
117	Vargas	Grade 3 Dual	15	36/3	14/2	18/2	25/2
118	Rivera	Grade 2 Dual	13	41/3	16/2	22/2	28/2
119	Cowles	SPED Supervisor					
120	Wall	Grade 3	17	41/3	16/2	22/2	28/2
121	Henry	Grade 3 Dual	15	36/3	14/2	18/2	25/2
122	McDowell	Grade 3	17	41/3	16/2	22/2	28/2
123	Morin	Grade 3	17	36/3	14/2	18/2	25/2
131	Supply Closet			18/3			
136	Calm Room			27/3	11/2	16/2	19/2
137	Connect 1- Rodrigues	Multi Grade	10	40/3	16/2	22/2	26/2
139	Conect 2- Cossette	Multi Grade	10	45/3	16/2	26/2	30/2
140	Safe Space			27/3	11/2	16/2	19/2
CAF				225/3	88/2	117/2	160/2
204	Zikos	Grade 4	17	41/3	16/2	22/2	28/2
206	Keane	Grade 4	17	36/3	14/2	18/2	25/2
207	Briggs	Grade 4	17	36/3	14/2	18/2	25/2
208	Marquez	Grade 4 Dual	13	41/3	16/2	22/2	28/2
210	SPED-Pucci/Sergel	Multi Grade	10	36/3	14/2	18/2	25/2
211	Jackson-Ball	Grade 4 Dual	13	41/3	16/2	22/2	28/2
212	Payne	Grade 5	20	41/3	16/2	22/2	28/2
213	Empty			36/3	14/2	18/2	25/2
214	New 5th grade teacher	Grade 5	20	41/3	16/2	22/2	28/2
215	McGann	Grade 5	20	36/3	14/2	18/2	25/2
226	Smolen	Dean of Students					
226	Jacobs	AP					

227	Tallis & Weinheimer	Student Support	5	20/3	7/2	10/2	14/2
229	Mehlmann	SAC	5	17/3	7/2	10/2	14/2
230	Empty			15/3	7/2	8/2	12/2
231	Fallon	School Psych		7/1	1/2	4/2	6/2
232	Bailey	Speech		13/3	4/2	7/2	10/2
233	Schultz	SAC		15/3	6/2	8/2	10/2
235	John Hill/Schofield	SPED/Lit Coach		17/3	11/2	16/2	19/2
236	Staff Workroom			15/3	6/2	8/2	10/2
237	Staff Lunchroom			13/3			
238	Sullivan & Jean Hill	ESL	10	25/3	10/2	14/2	18/2
LIB				114/3			
242	Pratt	Technology		36/3	14/2	18/2	25/2
245	OT/PT						
315	Goodnow	Music		67/3	23/2	33/2	48/2
322	Moon	Art		77/3	40/2	40/2	53/2
323	Empty						
110/2	Kline- gym	PE/Health		273/3	110/2	142/2	187/2

**Appendix C: Southbridge Public Schools District Calendar; 2020-2021**

# SOUTHBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2020-2021 -- STAFF CALENDAR

Dates subject to change based on guidance from the Commonwealth of MA

	First Day of School
	Wednesday One Hour Early Release
	No School - Holiday/Vacation
	Professional Day (PD)/No School
	Half Day Early Release Day
	Snow Make-up Day

## AUGUST 2020 (6 days/teachers)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
						2
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

10-14 - New Teacher Institute  
17-18 - New Staff Orientation  
8/24 - 8/31 - All Staff PD

## SEPTEMBER 2020 (13 days/students; 21 days/teachers)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

9/1 - 9/11 - All Staff PD  
7 - No School/Labor Day  
14 - First Day of School (Grades 1-12)  
16 - First Day of School (K Only)  
17 - First Day of School (PreK Only)

## OCTOBER 2020 (21 days)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

12 - No School/Columbus Day  
tbd - Quarter 1 ends (MHS)

## NOVEMBER 2020 (17 days)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

11 - No School/Veteran's Day  
tbd - Trimester 1 Ends (elementary)  
25-27 - No School/Thanksgiving

## DECEMBER 2020 (17 days)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

24 - 31 - No School/Winter break

## JANUARY 2021 (18 days/students; 19 days/teachers)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

1 - No School/New Year's Day  
tbd - Quarter 2 ends (MHS)  
15 - No School/PD Day  
18 - No School/MLK Day

## FEBRUARY 2021 (15 days)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

15 - No School/President's Day  
16-19 - No School - Feb vacation

## MARCH 2021 (22 days/students; 23 days/teachers)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

tbd - Trimester 2 Ends (elementary)  
19 - No School/PD Day

## APRIL 2021 (15 days/students; 16 days/teachers)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

tbd - Quarter 3 ends (MHS)  
2 - No School/Good Friday  
16 - No School/PD Day  
19 - No School/Patriots Day  
20 - 23 - No School - Apr vacation

## MAY 2021 (19 days/students; 20 days/teachers)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

28 - No School/PD Day  
31 - No School/Memorial Day

## JUNE 2021 (13 days)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Tbd - Quarter 4/Trimester 3 Ends  
17 - Early Release/Last Day  
18-24 - Snow Make-up Days

### Open House Dates

ERS: 9/15/20  
CSS: 9/16/20  
WSS: 9/24/20  
MHS: 9/30/20  
SA: 9/22/20

### Parent/Teacher Conference Dates

ERS: 11/2/20 & 2/12/21  
CSS: 11/4/20 & 2/3/21  
WSS: 11/5/20 & 2/4/21  
MHS Progress Report night: 3/3/21  
SA Progress Report night: 3/9/21

### School Hours for Teachers

Elementary: 8:15 - 3:45  
Secondary: 7:15 - 2:45  
SA: 7:15 - 2:45

### School Hours for Students

On Wed students are released one hour early  
Elementary: 8:30 a.m. - 3:15 p.m.  
Secondary: 7:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.  
SA - MS: 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
SA - HS: 7:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Updated 8/4/20



## **Appendix D: DESE and CDC COVID-19 Guidance Documentation**



## Remote Learning Guidance for Fall 2020

**Jeffrey C. Riley**  
**Commissioner**

July 24, 2020



## Introduction

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) [Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance](#) (*download*) outlines requirements and considerations for fall reopening plans with the **goal of safely returning as many students as possible to in-person school settings to maximize learning and address students' holistic needs**. The Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance requires districts and schools to prepare a plan that includes three learning models: in-person learning with safety requirements, a hybrid model of in-person and remote learning, and a plan for full-time remote learning. Remote learning will be necessary for students who will not be attending school in-person, as part of a hybrid learning model, and in case changing COVID-19 conditions require a shift to full remote learning as determined by local and state leaders. The following guidance provides additional detail on remote learning expectations, program models districts may consider, and considerations for implementing various models.

### In this document, you will find:

- **Important information about policy requirements and related guidance for remote learning** this fall,
- Criteria for meeting **foundational technology needs**, and
- Conditions and considerations for **selecting an appropriate remote learning option for your school or district**.

For more information or assistance, please contact Jackie Gantzer, director of remote learning, at [jacquelyn.m.gantzer@mass.gov](mailto:jacquelyn.m.gantzer@mass.gov) or 781-338-3519.

While this document will outline important differences in our expectations for remote learning this fall as compared to spring 2020, remote learning plans should continue to adhere to the guiding principles in the April 2020 ["Strengthening the Remote Learning Experience"](#) (*download*) guidance:

- **The safety and well-being of students, families, and staff has been and must continue to be our top priority as an educational community.** We are focused not only on physical health, safety, and nutrition, but also on [social-emotional](#) and mental health needs.
- This crisis disproportionately affects our most vulnerable students in terms of their physical and mental health and academically. **Equity needs to be a top consideration in local planning efforts.** To support these efforts, DESE has issued guidance on how best to support special populations, including [students with disabilities](#) (*download*) and [English learners](#).
- **Maintaining connections between school staff, students, and families is paramount, particularly for the most vulnerable members of our school communities.** These connections will help guide districts and schools in addressing students' specific needs.

In addition, **we as an education community must commit to a growth mindset in order to effectively navigate these unprecedented times.** Everyone – leaders, educators, students, and families – is managing competing priorities, navigating new experiences, learning new skills, and dealing with the uncertainty of an ongoing health pandemic. We must make the best decisions we can with the information we have, implement those decisions to the best of our ability, continuously gather feedback on what is or is not working, and adjust.

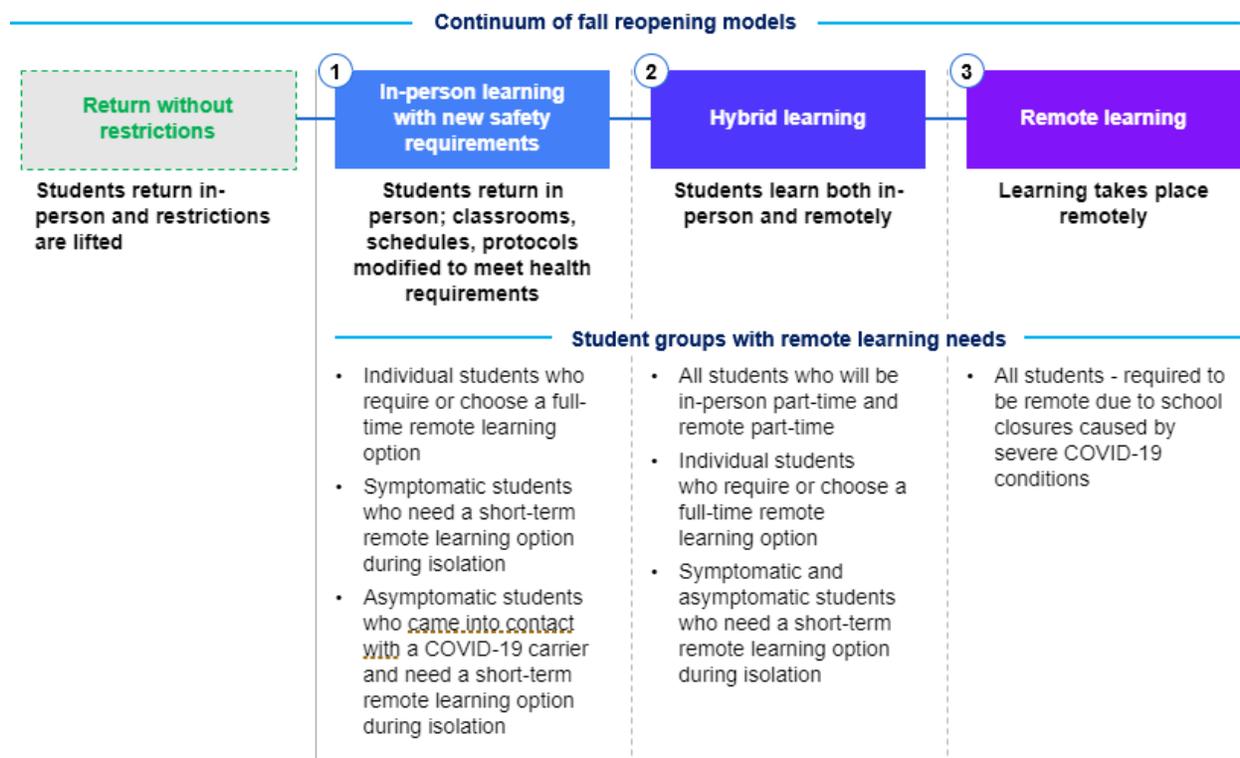
In particular, we **emphasize a commitment to equity during this challenging time**. The coronavirus has disproportionately impacted vulnerable students and their families, and we must continue to take action to ensure that **all** students, including our highest-need students have the access, resources, and high-quality instruction they deserve.

## One plan with three learning models

Given the variety of student, family, teacher, and staff needs, as well as the potential for changing health circumstances, we are requiring districts and schools to prepare a reopening plan that includes the three learning models: in-person learning with new safety requirements, a hybrid of in-person and remote learning, and a comprehensive fully-remote learning program.

**Regardless of the pandemic’s status this fall, planning for remote learning is necessary to ensure preparedness for changing circumstances and to address the needs of students impacted by each scenario** (Exhibit 1, below).

*Exhibit 1*



To support districts in creating and implementing remote learning plans, DESE is partnering with LearnLaunch for the 2020-21 school year. This partnership will provide workshops, coaching, and resources for Massachusetts district and school leaders – free of charge – on the [Building Blocks of Equitable Remote Learning](#) framework. Districts interested in accessing this resource can visit the [LearnLaunch website](#) for more information or reach out directly to Jackie Gantzer (contact information above).

## Requirements and related guidance for remote learning this fall

On June 30, 2020, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted, on an emergency basis, amendments to the student learning time regulations, 603 CMR 27.00. In particular, the amendments include 603 CMR 27.08(3)(b), which requires all remote learning models to meet the following standards:

- Procedures for all students to participate in remote learning, including a system for tracking attendance and participation;
- Remote academic work is aligned to state standards; and
- A policy for issuing grades for students' remote academic work.
- Teachers and administrators shall regularly communicate with students' parents and guardians, including providing interpretation and translation services to limited English proficient parents and guardians.

### Structured Learning Time

Remote learning this spring took place during school closures ordered by the Governor, and districts were not required to fully meet the student learning time requirements. **This will change for the fall. Districts will be required to meet the structured learning time requirements, whether they are providing instruction in-person, remotely, or in a hybrid model.**

**While these requirements may be modified in the future, at this time, regardless of the learning model (in-person, hybrid, or remote), the minimum school year is 180 days, and students must receive a minimum of 900 and 990 hours of structured learning time for elementary and secondary students, respectively.**

Remote learning constitutes structured learning time so long as a district's remote learning model is consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 27.08(3)(b) outlined above. Structured learning time is defined in the regulations as "time during which students are engaged in regularly scheduled instruction, learning activities, or learning assessments within the curriculum for study of the 'core subjects' and 'other subjects.' In addition to classroom time where both teachers and students are present, structured learning time may include directed study, independent study, technology-assisted learning, presentations by persons other than teachers, school-to-work programs, and statewide student performance assessments." **All the activities listed in this definition may be incorporated in or adapted to hybrid and remote learning programs, and we encourage districts to incorporate learning time activities that are both computer-based and non-computer-based.**

As with in-person programming, some activities that may occur during the school day, while organized by a teacher or school staff member, do not constitute structured learning time. Unless directly incorporated into standards-based instructional time, the following activities do not meet the criteria described above and do not count toward meeting the minimum structured learning time requirement: recess, social or informal check-ins, non-instructional games, unstructured study periods, and participating in optional school programming (such as social clubs).

### **Prioritizing Students for In-Person Learning**

In cases where districts cannot bring all students back in-person and are implementing either a predominantly hybrid or remote model, they may choose to identify groups of students to attend school in-person full-time – so long as the district is able to effectively follow health and safety requirements. Some students have a particularly high need for in-person instruction in order to progress adequately in their learning. **For this reason, we encourage districts to prioritize the following student groups for full-time in-person instruction:**

1. Students with disabilities and English learners, particularly those with more intensive needs;
2. Students whose parents/caregivers report that they do not have access to reliable internet or a suitable learning space at home (particularly students experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity and students in foster care or congregate care);
3. Students who are significantly behind academically;
4. Students who were disengaged and/or who struggled significantly during previous remote learning periods; and
5. Early learners (grades PK-5).

In cases where the student populations listed above comprise too large a group to safely return all of the prioritized students in person, we strongly encourage districts to prioritize students in the first two groups for in-person instruction.

Even if a student is prioritized for in-person learning, **parents/caregivers have the option to choose a district’s remote learning program for their child’s instruction if they prefer – with the understanding that the remote learning program may not provide as robust offerings as, or replace the full benefits of, learning in person.** At no point should schools or districts “counsel” students into a particular program due to behavior challenges.

### **Enrollment**

Schools and districts should continue to report the enrollment status of all students via SIMS (Student Information Management System) in accordance with [normal procedures](#), including those attending in person and remotely.

Many superintendents have surveyed parents/caregivers about their intention to have their children return to school. We recommend that districts and parents/caregivers continue to be in close communication so that schools can plan for staffing and programming thoughtfully. If a district is able to provide in-person programming and a student is physically able to attend, at this time, DESE recommends starting with in-person learning. However, **parents/caregivers who do not want their child(ren) to return in person may choose a district’s remote learning program.**

In addition, parents/caregivers should keep students home from school if they are sick or have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19, and districts and schools are required to provide a learning program to students in all of these scenarios, though specific remote learning programming will depend on individual districts and schools.

There may be circumstances in which, after deciding that their children should start the school year learning remotely, parents decide they would like their children to attend school in person. However, there will likely be health and safety considerations that require planning (such as maintaining appropriate distancing in the classroom), and as such, parents/caregivers should anticipate a reasonable waiting period before students are able to change from remote to in-person learning. **If necessary to comply with health and safety requirements, districts may establish a policy that sets a reasonable transition period, ideally no more than three to four weeks, to plan for the transition of a student from remote to in-person learning.** During this time period, teaching and learning must continue uninterrupted for that student.

### **Attendance**

**Schools and districts must take daily attendance whether a student is in person or remote.** Consistent with 603 CMR 27.08(3)(b), districts must have a daily attendance policy and system for remote learning that can be reported into SIMS. Schools may employ multiple ways to track attendance (e.g., monitor whether students are present in synchronous sessions, submitting assignments online, logging onto online learning platforms, attending virtual check-ins, etc.) depending on the structure of the remote learning program. It is critical that districts clearly communicate this policy to students, families, and staff to ensure attendance reporting accuracy.

**During the 2020-21 school year, DESE will also require schools and districts to differentiate between students attending school in-person and remotely in their local Student Information System.** This data will allow DESE to monitor remote learning programming and student engagement across the Commonwealth. The Department will release information soon with directions for districts to report this information.

**Parents/caregivers are responsible for ensuring their child attends school every day, whether for in-person or remote learning. Schools and districts must continue to investigate extended absences and make and document reasonable efforts to locate the student and determine the reason for nonattendance.** In addition to attendance officers, schools may identify staff members who are unable to return to school in person who could support more robust efforts to follow-up with absent students. Districts and schools are especially encouraged during this time to work directly with families to identify barriers to student attendance and to support families in alleviating these challenges. Specifically, we encourage districts to create formal support plans for students and families experiencing challenges. Additional guidance, information, and resources for communicating with and engaging students and families can be found on DESE's [Social and Emotional Learning](#) page.

### **Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning**

Districts may determine the amount of synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning during remote learning programming. However, consistent with 603 CMR 27.08(3)(b), DESE requires that **remote learning programs include regular, two-way communication between students, educators, and families to ensure students and families have meaningful opportunities to connect regularly with staff.** Students must have regular, consistent opportunities to access live, synchronous instruction, student-to-student interaction, collaborative assignments/projects, teacher feedback, and other needed supports (e.g., semi-weekly office hours, individual check-ins with students bi-weekly, etc.), as they are critical for student academic growth and meaningful student and family engagement.

## **Grades**

Consistent with 603 CMR 27.08(3)(b), **districts must assess all students based on the district’s and educator’s performance criteria for students during the 2020-21 academic year.** This performance criteria must be consistent across in-person, hybrid, and remote learning environments. For example, if students typically receive a letter grade (A-F) for a particular course, students who are participating remotely must also receive a letter grade. Although a district’s grading policy will be implemented across all scenarios, districts should consider exemptions for students under extreme circumstances (e.g., students in households with family members experiencing significant health issues related to COVID-19) and ensure they receive the appropriate support and wraparound services to accelerate learning.

## **Learning Standards**

Consistent with 603 CMR 27.08(3)(b), **all students – whether learning in-person or remotely – must have access to grade-level instruction in all content areas included in the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks.** While the scope and sequence of the instruction teachers provide will vary depending on student needs and district requirements, all students will be required to take the MCAS tests in spring 2021. Students learning remotely should also have opportunities to engage in enrichment opportunities and receive intervention supports as needed.

## **Special Education in Remote Settings**

**All schools and districts are required to have a [comprehensive plan](#) (download) for delivering special education instruction and services remotely.** A remote model must be available for individual students who are not returning in person, as well as for students attending in person in the event of future classroom or school closures due to COVID-19.

During the spring of 2020, DESE described two models of service delivery that could be used to satisfy the requirement to provide a free and appropriate public education to students with disabilities:

- **Resources and Supports:** (e.g., sending packets and assignments home coupled with frequent communication with parents) and
- **Instruction and Services:** (e.g., structured learning time, teletherapy, and video conferencing).

**With the ability to plan for the possibility of remote service delivery during the 2020-21 school year, schools and districts must be prepared to provide services through the “Instruction and Services” mode of delivery.** The “Resources and Supports” delivery model can only be used on a temporary basis for a limited period of time (no more than two weeks), until the school or district has overcome any hurdles that prevented service delivery through an “Instruction and Services” model.

For school year 2020-21, Instruction and Services must include the following components:

- A regular and consistent schedule of classes, interventions, services, and therapies as required by the student’s IEP, offered synchronously or asynchronously;
- Structured learning time designed so that the student can access state standards; and
- Frequent interactions with teachers and other staff members to ensure participation.

The consistent schedule of classes, interventions, services, and therapies must include time students spend interacting directly with teachers and related service providers on a regular basis, as well as some independent work time, as appropriate, and opportunities for interacting with classmates. Synchronous remote lessons or tele-therapy sessions can be provided via telephone or video conferencing. Students might also benefit from asynchronous pre-recorded videos of lessons to follow at home. For students receiving the majority of their daily instruction through special education, teachers and therapists should assign supplemental work (beyond lessons taught synchronously or asynchronously) during the school day that can be accomplished independently with guidance from and accountability to the teacher or therapist.

### **English as Second Language (ESL) in Remote Settings**

Districts and schools must continue to meet their legal obligation to serve English learners, even when students are learning remotely. **All schools and districts must have a comprehensive plan for delivering English Learner Education (ELE) services remotely**, and this model must be available for individual students who are not returning in person and for all students in the event of future classroom or school closures due to COVID-19. Districts can find additional recommendations and resources in [DESE's Guidance on Remote Learning for English Learners](#).

To improve English learners' educational opportunities, educators and families should work as partners. Without opportunities to interact in person, it is even more important to build and maintain strong relationships. The Department provided additional [guidelines](#) with tools and resources for students who are English learners and for the educators and families who are supporting their learning.

## **Foundational technology needs for remote learning**

In order to prepare for the full range of possible learning environments during the 2020-21 school year, districts must ensure that every student has adequate access to technology to engage in remote learning. Further, districts should confirm that staff members have what they need to effectively teach while they are remote and/or to reach students who are learning remotely. To support these efforts, districts should include the following in remote learning plans:

### **Access and connectivity for every student and educator**

**Districts should ensure that every individual student and educator has access to an appropriate device (such as a laptop, Chromebook, or tablet) and adequate internet (such as through household broadband or a wireless hotspot) to use for remote learning.** Districts are encouraged to use multiple funding sources to ensure full access to technology in the beginning of the 2020-21 school year. Districts should consider allocating funding from the following [grants](#) made available to cities, towns, and districts:

- \$25 million from the Remote Learning Technology Essentials grants, which will be distributed to districts to help close gaps in student access to devices and the internet;
- \$193.8 million from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund, issued to districts largely based on the Title I formula;
- A portion of the \$502 million from the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CvRF) already allocated to cities and towns, of which a meaningful amount of submitted costs are related to education; and
- \$182 million from the CvRF School Reopening grants, through which districts will receive \$225 per pupil to support school reopening.

## **Uniform digital learning platforms**

According to DESE's spring technology survey, the majority of Massachusetts districts currently have some form of a learning management system (LMS), though some may need to add supplemental platforms and programs to support full delivery of remote instruction. For the 2020-21 school year, districts should work closely with educators, students, and families to select and implement technology platforms and promote safe and effective use throughout the year. We expect districts to include the types of technology platforms listed below or their equivalent as part of their remote learning plan.<sup>1</sup>

- **Learning Management System (LMS) platform** (*for schools without an LMS*): Select and license an LMS platform that will enable self-directed study and allow teachers to assign and receive work, track progress, and provide targeted feedback and support. (Google Classroom, Canvas, and Schoology are three of the most widely learning management system platforms used in Massachusetts districts).
- **Collaboration tools**: Identify and select common collaboration tools for staff and students and purchase enterprise licenses if selected technologies are not open-use. Ensure all stakeholders are using compatible software for activities such as:
  - Face-to-face communication (e.g. Google Meet, Skype, Zoom)
  - Instant messaging (e.g. Slack, Skype)
  - Document collaboration (e.g. Google Documents, Microsoft Office 365)
  - File-sharing (e.g. Box, Dropbox, Google Drive, Office 365)
  - Calendar-sharing (e.g. Google Calendar, iCalendar, Microsoft Outlook)
- **Content platform(s)**: For asynchronous and supplemental learning materials, identify common content platforms (such as Khan Academy) that educators use for direct and/or supplemental instruction (e.g. readings, videos, tutorials, and games) and that can be integrated with the district learning management system.
- **Single-sign on platform**: Incorporate a platform that provides a single-sign on access point for students and families to make accessing remote learning as simple as possible. Common platforms used in Massachusetts include Clever and ClassLink.

## **Training and support for students, families, and staff members**

Districts should set expectations for account setup and user testing on new platforms, disseminate user guides and online resources, and offer technical support resources and training, if needed. Districts and schools should provide streamlined, consistent communication and support to enable all students, parents/caregivers, and/or educators to do the following:

- Log on to their device and use technology tools and platforms safely and effectively
- Access ongoing technology support (both for hardware and network issues)
- Access curriculum and content
- Assign and/or complete and submit assignments and receive feedback
- Monitor course progress and student performance (such as grades and assessment results)
- Engage with their teacher(s) for instruction and interact with other students

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<sup>1</sup> *Disclaimer: This section includes tools and resources for districts and educators who are supporting remote learning. The Department is providing this information as a service. The tools and resources listed do not represent an endorsement or recommendation by DESE of any instructional resource, product, or eLearning system.*

- Access services and accommodations for students with disabilities
- Access services for English learners

### **School and district technology systems**

Each district and school should name a technology lead to create, implement, and monitor technology systems throughout the year. We recommend that each technology lead, in collaboration with other school staff members and stakeholders, manage the following systems:

- **Device management:** Monitor inventory, distribution, and maintenance
- **Security compliance:** Ensure all technology platforms and tools comply with the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the federal Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). Districts are strongly encouraged to join the [Student Data Privacy Alliance](#) for additional resources and ongoing support.
- **Technology support:** Identify and/or provide ongoing technical support for educators, students, and parents/caregivers. Districts are encouraged to join the [Massachusetts Technology Directors Listserv](#) to collaborate with other technology leads across the Commonwealth.
- **Progress monitoring:** Develop mechanisms to collect and integrate feedback on the learning platforms (e.g. administer a regular survey, hold focus groups), and facilitate sharing of best practices across staff (e.g. start a living document of tips and tricks, hold peer tech support sessions).

## **Options for remote learning programs**

In this section, we outline several remote learning options that are available to districts and schools this fall. When determining which option(s) to pursue, districts should consider the following conditions to identify the option(s) that best align with the district’s resources and needs:

- **Alignment to district-wide plan:** How does the remote learning model fit within the district’s broader plan for 2020-21 (including in-person and/or hybrid plans)? How many students will need access to a full-time remote program?
- **Planning and implementation:** How will the district secure enough resources and capacity to plan and implement the necessary remote learning program?
- **Staffing:** How many staff members are available to teach remotely? How prepared are they to teach in a remote setting? What kind of support do they need?
- **Curriculum and instructional materials:** Does the district have high-quality, adaptable instructional materials that can be used in a remote setting?
- **Options and cost/benefits analysis:** What are the options within and between remote learning programs, and what are the costs and benefits?

The following pages include charts that summarize five options for remote learning programs, which districts might benefit most from each, and what some of the high-level benefits and challenges are for each. These models are not mutually exclusive, and different models may be used for different groups of students to meet varying needs. **In every model, districts and**

**schools are ultimately responsible for the overall student learning experience so that all students are appropriately engaged, making academic progress, and have the resources and support they need throughout the year.**

**Option 1: Operate a fully district-designed and district-run remote program.**

Districts may build upon systems and experiences from the spring to operate a full-time remote program for students. Districts would need to provide all technology (including a learning management system and content platforms), technology support, instructional and operational staffing, curriculum, and related professional development. District teachers and staff would be responsible for delivering instruction aligned to state standards, providing feedback (including grades) to students, monitoring attendance and engagement, communicating with students and families, etc. This option, while requiring a significant investment of district resources and capacity, may provide strong alignment between students attending school remotely, in person, and in hybrid settings. If districts are considering building a remote/virtual program that can be sustained in future years and beyond COVID-19-related needs, they may consider applying to develop and operate a District Virtual School. The Department’s [guidance for District Virtual Schools](#) provides helpful information and resources for districts seeking to implement this option for both the short- and long-term.

- **Alignment to district-wide plan:** Program should be designed to fully align to current academic programs and remote learning needs in a way that allows for seamless transitions between in-person, hybrid, and remote settings.
- **Staffing needs:** Requires full school-based staffing models to run all areas of the program, and staff members will need to be trained on all areas of effective remote/virtual instruction.
- **Cost:** Dependent on existing district infrastructure and details of local remote program, though generally there are “start-up” costs for areas like technology and training that, once fully operational, more closely compares to in-person costs per student.

Likely Best For	Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Districts with sufficient staffing available to deliver remote instruction for all grade levels and content areas needed</li> <li>● Districts with high-quality, adaptable curriculum and strong technology infrastructure</li> <li>● Districts that experienced fewer challenges adapting to remote learning in the spring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fully aligned to district academic program (learning priorities, curriculum, scope and sequence, etc.)</li> <li>● Lends itself to moving between in-person, hybrid, and remote more seamlessly</li> <li>● May be used in subsequent years regardless of the status of the virus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Requires significant capacity in terms of planning, staffing, and implementing</li> </ul>

**Option 2: Adopt and implement a high-quality curriculum that easily spans in-person and remote settings.**

Adopting high-quality curriculum and instructional materials can be a powerful way to accelerate student learning. Given the various learning environments districts are planning for, this may also be an opportunity for districts to select curricular materials that are designed to be used across in-person, hybrid, and remote settings. The Department recently applied to the U.S. Department of Education (USED) for grant funding to procure high-quality, comprehensive instructional materials that would be made available to districts. Instructional materials would be available for grades K-8 in ELA and math, designed for teaching in-person or remotely, and would be paired with training and coaching. The U.S. Department of Education expects to notify DESE in late-July whether or not funding is available for this option.

- **Alignment to district-wide plan:** Students should access the same high-quality content and instruction regardless of whether they are using a remote, in-person, or hybrid model.
- **Staffing needs:** Requires full school-based staffing models to run all areas of the program. Staff members are recommended to participate in training to adopt and effectively implement the new instructional materials.
- **Cost:** Funding will vary based on curriculum options; DESE may provide funding to support these costs.

Likely Best For	Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Districts with sufficient staffing available to deliver remote instruction for all grade levels and content areas needed</li> <li>● Districts with strong technology infrastructure</li> <li>● Districts with an appetite to adopt and train on a new set of instructional materials</li> <li>● Districts anticipating many students moving between in-person, hybrid, and/or remote programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Receive high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials that can be adapted to use for in-person, hybrid, and remote settings</li> <li>● Educators receive professional development on instructional delivery in remote, hybrid, and in-person settings</li> <li>● Creates a coherent learning program for all students, with certain curricula providing demonstrated gains for students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Requires significant staff capacity to adopt a new set of instructional materials and to dedicate time for training</li> <li>● Additional costs associated with purchasing and implementing a new curriculum</li> </ul>

**Option 3: Combine pre-existing instructional materials with online virtual teaching materials.**

The Department will curate recommendations for virtual content/instructional materials that educators can use for direct and supplemental remote instruction. The Department will provide a sample schedule for elementary, middle school, and high school students that includes recommended virtual content available for core subject areas. Districts and schools can select and incorporate the virtual content that builds on their current curriculum and instructional materials and that meets their specific needs.

- **Alignment to district-wide plan:** Content should be tailored to the specific needs of the district’s plan – as primary content for remote learning only or to supplement remote, hybrid, and/or in-person instruction.
- **Staffing needs:** Requires district educators to plan and deliver all remote instruction. Relieves some instructor planning and instructional time by providing vetted content resources, though educators would still need to assign individual activities and lessons to students based on district scope and sequence and student need.
- **Cost:** May require optional licenses for specific high-quality content and platforms (cost varies by source).

Likely Best For	Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Districts with sufficient staffing available to deliver remote instruction for all grade levels and content areas needed and educators who are able to navigate technology platforms fairly well</li> <li>● Districts that would benefit from supplementing remote learning plans with vetted virtual content</li> <li>● Districts with a small percentage of students needing or choosing full-time remote instruction and/or districts leaning towards a predominantly hybrid model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Educators have the ability to supplement instruction with vetted content as needed</li> <li>● Educators can spend more time planning for and providing individual student support instead of planning and delivering all instructional content</li> <li>● Can be designed to be coherent with in-person and hybrid models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Requires capacity for schools/ educators to select and assign appropriate content and navigate multiple content platforms</li> </ul>

#### Option 4: Purchase courses through Commonwealth Virtual Schools (CMVS).

Commonwealth Virtual Schools (CMVS) can provide individual courses or a full bundle of courses to schools or districts through an agreement that allows the student to remain enrolled in their home district. These courses must meet the district’s or school’s standards and requirements. The CMVS provides the teacher, the learning management system/curriculum platform, the courses, synchronous or asynchronous content, assignments, and assessments. Districts would assign educators and/or other staff members to monitor student progress and provide additional supports.

- **Alignment to district-wide plan:** Serves best as a stand-alone program for a small percentage of students who require remote-only programming. Does not lend itself to students moving between in-person, hybrid, and/or remote settings.
- **Staffing needs:** Requires assigning teachers/staff to monitor and facilitate student progress, but no direct instruction for core content.
- **Cost:** Around \$350-\$575 per student per semester-long course. Districts may also purchase course “bundles” for students to cover all required courses for a semester or a full year.

Likely Best For	Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Districts with staffing concerns (number available and prepared for remote instruction)</li> <li>● Districts that experienced many challenges with remote learning in the spring</li> <li>● Districts with a small percentage of students needing or choosing full-time remote instruction</li> <li>● Districts with specific gaps in remote instructional offerings that individual courses could fill effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students access a single or full suite of grade-level, semester-long courses that include a learning management system, content, and synchronous and asynchronous instruction with a Massachusetts-certified teacher</li> <li>● Can fill gaps in courses/subjects, particularly in the secondary grades</li> <li>● Requires minimal district planning and staffing resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Requires an additional cost per student</li> <li>● Curriculum may not be aligned with district’s existing curriculum; doesn’t lend itself to students moving between in-person, hybrid, and remote learning throughout the semester</li> <li>● Districts would need a separate plan if all students went remote</li> <li>● Districts will have to establish a purchasing agreement with one of two CMVS; limited spaces available</li> </ul>

**Option 5: Purchase student licenses for a Learning Management System (LMS) with full course content included.**

While districts may purchase licenses from a virtual course and content provider at any time, DESE is exploring partnerships with vendors that could provide a stand-alone, self-paced LMS populated with full K-12 content that can be used by students to cover the basic curriculum standards on a largely asynchronous basis. While this platform would not depend on frequent synchronous live teaching, it would require assigned and targeted educator check-in/coaching support from the district/school and would benefit from added synchronous instructional opportunities. The LMS partner sought by DESE would provide all technical support for districts and families that opt-in. The LMS partner would also provide professional development to districts on how to deploy the system (potentially embedded as part of the per-pupil buy-in cost).

- **Alignment to district-wide plan:** Serves best as a stand-alone program for a small or large percentage of students who are interested in a remote learning option for a longer period of time. Does not lend itself to students moving between in-person, hybrid, and/or remote settings unless the district decides to adopt the LMS-provided curriculum for all students.
- **Staffing needs:** Requires assigning teachers/staff (e.g. educators who must work remotely) to monitor and facilitate student progress, provide additional support, and possibly to provide tutoring or other live, synchronous opportunities.
- **Cost:** Initial research shows it could range from \$200-\$400 annually per student for access to a full suite of courses.

Likely Best For	Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Districts with staffing concerns (concerned about the number of staff available and prepared for remote instruction)</li> <li>● Districts with limited technology and system infrastructure to create and oversee a fully remote program</li> <li>● Districts with individual students/families who are interested in a fully remote option for a longer period of time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students access a full suite of courses that include an LMS and instructional content that is largely self-directed and asynchronous.</li> <li>● Supplements district staffing with additional resources</li> <li>● Allows for easier collaboration and sharing of resources across school and district boundaries (e.g., grouping students at the same grade level and/or sharing teachers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Requires an additional cost per student</li> <li>● Depending on the number and configuration of participating students, the district may need to creatively assign educators to student groups, such as assigning an educator to support multiple grade levels and/or students across multiple schools.</li> <li>● Curriculum is not aligned with district curriculum and doesn't easily lend itself to students moving between in-person, hybrid, and remote throughout the year (unless the district adopts the LMS curriculum for all students).</li> </ul>

## Next steps for planning and implementation

As districts identify how they will deliver remote learning for the 2020-21 school year, they will need to work closely with students, families, and educators to ensure their implementation plan takes into consideration the needs of all participating students.

LearnLaunch has provided a [framework](#) to help districts plan and implement comprehensive remote learning plans, regardless of the specific model adopted. Below is a set of planning considerations and next steps aligned to this framework. Districts should visit the LearnLaunch [website](#) for helpful tools and information about upcoming workshops, or reach out to Jackie Gantzer, director of remote learning, at [jacquelyn.m.gantzer@mass.gov](mailto:jacquelyn.m.gantzer@mass.gov) or 781-338-3519.

### **1. Prepare for the 2020-21 school year**

#### **Set Priorities for Learning**

- Determine the academic vision for the 2020-21 school year and how it will be implemented in remote learning settings.
- Plan learning experiences, including content, instruction, and progress monitoring.

#### **Select Aligned Tools**

- Ensure all curriculum and instructional materials are high quality and integrated with the district Student Information Systems and other technology platforms, where possible.
- See the “Uniform Digital Learning Platforms” section above for additional detail.

#### **Ensure Equitable Access**

- See the “Foundational Technology Needs” section above for additional detail on technology requirements.
- Ensure students, staff, and families know how to effectively access and use all content and technology platforms selected.
- Assist participating families in getting the resources they need to effectively support and monitor student learning

### **2. Onboard staff, students, and families**

#### **Communicate Clearly**

- Create weekly consolidated communications to students and parents/caregivers, including meeting times and assignment checklists.
- Establish regular two-way communication with students, staff, and families to monitor program effectiveness and adjust support strategies where needed.
- Develop communication plans and strategies that are culturally responsive and accessible, including providing translation services.

#### **Prepare Educators**

- Work closely with educators to collectively plan and problem-solve and to understand their experiences and challenges.
- Assign teachers/staff to provide necessary instructional and support roles.
- Provide job-embedded professional development for specific staffing assignments.

### **Support Parents**

- Create opportunities to regularly communicate with parents/caregivers in ways that are accessible and culturally responsive. These opportunities should give staff an opportunity to understand parents'/caregivers' experiences and challenges.
- Connect parents/caregivers to technical support and resources related to student learning.
- Provide explicit expectations for parent/caregiver responsibilities and offer ongoing resources and support for implementing and monitoring student learning at home.

### **3. Ensure program delivery is inclusive and holistic**

#### **Include Social Emotional Learning (SEL)**

- Prioritize building relationships and a sense of community.
- Provide resources, instructional time, and gather feedback to promote student and teacher well-being.
- Incorporate trauma-informed practices as part of regular instruction and student support.

#### **Engage Learners**

- Provide variation in mode of instruction, including enrichment, experiential learning, real-time feedback, and project-based learning.
- Allow for student voice and choice and provide opportunities to build students' capacity for self-directed learning.
- Create a standard action plan to identify and support students not effectively engaged in remote learning.

#### **Plan for Special Education**

- Ensure students with disabilities receive all necessary supports and services through district staff and/or external providers.
- Ensure all instructional materials and content are accessible to students with disabilities and/or that staff members provide appropriate accommodations for students where necessary.
- Reference DESE [guidance on special education](#).

#### **Address Needs of English Learners**

- Ensure English learners receive all necessary supports and services through district staff and/or external providers.
- Incorporate programs and content specifically designed for English learners.
- Reference DESE [guidance on English learners](#).

# Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations Guidance

July 22, 2020

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## Introduction

As a supplement to [\*DESE's Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance\*](#), we are providing districts and schools with this guidance on **facilities and operations** for reopening this fall.

As stated in our *Initial Fall Reopening Guidance*, our goal is to promote the **safe** in-person return of as many students as possible in a school setting. For students and staff to return to school, schools and districts will need to prepare their facilities and adapt operating procedures to adhere to medically-advised health and safety requirements. Additionally, districts should follow federal, state, and local safety requirements applicable to school buildings.

As we continually review the medical and science literature, various reports and articles, and information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO), and other countries and states, ***it is clear that it is not a single action, but the combination of actions that minimize risk, mitigate the virus's transmission, and help create safe environments.***

This Facilities and Operations Guidance provides additional details and considerations for school facilities and grounds, as well as operational protocols based on the most recent information we have about COVID-19 and related mitigation practices. As the knowledge and research related to COVID-19 continues to evolve, this Facilities and Operations Guidance will be updated as appropriate.

This guidance begins with a summary of the critical health and safety requirements, followed by communications guidance. It then provides information in three main sections, followed by examples of classroom, lab, and other space planning diagrams. The three sections are:

1. Preparing spaces,
2. Making systems and other space-use modifications, and
3. Developing operational protocols

## Support for schools and districts

To support districts and schools in implementing this Facilities and Operations Guidance, DESE is providing the following assistance:

### **Financial resources:**

To date, the following federal grants have been available to cities and towns for educational expenses related to COVID-19:

- \$193.8 million from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund to districts, largely based on the Title I formula.
- A portion of the \$502 million from the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CvRF) already allocated to cities and towns

In addition to the above funds, the Commonwealth is making available:

- **\$202 million from the CvRF to support school reopening.** Of the \$202 million, \$182 million will be formula grants (\$225 per pupil), and \$20 million will be available at the Commissioner's discretion for distribution to districts with unmet needs.
- **\$25 million available for remote learning technology grants** to match local amounts that districts plan to spend by the beginning of the school year.

While school and district budgets remain uncertain, these additional resources will help schools and districts provide a healthy and safe environment for in-person learning in the fall.

**Technical assistance, including with ventilation/HVAC systems:**

For help with general questions about the information in this Facilities and Operations Guidance, please contact:

- **Russell Johnston:** Senior Associate Commissioner, [Russell.Johnston@mass.gov](mailto:Russell.Johnston@mass.gov), 781-605-4958
- **Erin McMahon:** Fall Reopening Implementation Lead, [Erin.K.Mcmahon@mass.gov](mailto:Erin.K.Mcmahon@mass.gov), 781-873-9023

For help with questions about ventilation and HVAC systems, please contact: **Matt Deninger**, Acting Chief Strategy and Research Officer, at [Matthew.J.Deninger@mass.gov](mailto:Matthew.J.Deninger@mass.gov) or 781-338-3117.

**Waivers for student learning time requirements:**

For changes in scheduling related to the use of spaces, including staggered schedules and mealtime scheduling, schools and districts may require flexibilities with student learning time requirements in order to enable more students to return to school in-person. If so, districts should contact Russell Johnston ([russell.johnston@mass.gov](mailto:russell.johnston@mass.gov)) or Erin McMahon ([erin.k.mcmahon@mass.gov](mailto:erin.k.mcmahon@mass.gov)) to request a waiver from student learning time requirements. More information on waiver requests will be forthcoming.

## Critical health and safety requirements for facilities

Developed in consultation with pediatricians, infectious disease physicians, other medical advisers, and the COVID-19 Command Center's Medical Advisory Board, and including a review of CDC and WHO guidance, the health and safety standards and requirements below will enable students and staff to safely return to school this fall. These requirements will need to be supported by adjustments to how school facilities are used and how they operate. More details on implementation practices and considerations follow in this document.

- **Masks:** Masks are one of the most important tools to prevent transmission of the virus. From a facilities and operations perspective, it is important to consider how to best support adherence to masking, including putting up signs with reminders to wear masks and how to remove them safely, having a supply of masks for staff and students who may need them, safely disposing of soiled or unusable masks, and identifying spaces that are appropriate for mask breaks. *Masks covering the nose and mouth* are to be worn by students (required for grade 2 students and up and strongly encouraged for kindergarten and grade 1), staff, visitors, and vendors. Exceptions for meals, mask breaks, and medical exemptions are permitted.
- **Handwashing and hand sanitizing:** Enabling good hand hygiene practices is another key tool to mitigate transmission of the virus. From a facilities and operations perspective, enabling good hand hygiene practices spans from student and staff arrival at school until their departure. This includes providing handwashing or sanitizing stations (touchless if feasible) in commonly used areas (e.g., entries and exits, classrooms, bathrooms, eating areas, stairwell exits, etc.), ensuring sufficient supplies to accommodate frequent hand washing, and having hand sanitizer readily accessible.
- **Physical distancing:** Physical distancing is a critical component in mitigating the transmission of the virus. Schools should aim for a physical distance of 6 feet when feasible; 3 feet is the minimum distance allowed. During meals, mask breaks, and other times when masks are not worn, 6 feet is the minimum distance allowed. From a facilities and operations perspective, it is important to understand how these minimum requirements will affect space layouts and movement protocols.
- **Creating cohorts wherever possible:** Directly related to physical distancing is the idea of creating cohorts (e.g. self-contained groups) of students wherever possible and limiting the cohort from interaction with others. Examples of cohorts could include an elementary school class, students on a bus, or groups of older students with similar schedules. By grouping students and staff into cohorts, interaction will be limited. This means that if there is a positive COVID-19 case in the school, fewer individuals will have interacted with that person. Cohorts should be used to the extent feasible for classes, transportation, mask breaks, meals, recess, and extra-curriculars. **To assist with establishing cohorts, all students should have assigned seating** in each class and to the extent feasible for

meals and other activities. Washable mats could be used for early elementary and preschool students to define individual spaces for children.

- **School cleaning and disinfecting:** From a facilities perspective, schools should update cleaning and disinfecting protocols, obtain additional supplies, and train staff appropriately. Cleaning and disinfecting should occur at least daily for shared spaces and furniture. For high-touch surfaces (e.g., door handles, light switches, handrails), cleaning and disinfecting should occur multiple times per day between uses.
- **Ventilation:** Schools should work to increase outdoor air ventilation instead of using recirculated air and increase air filtration as much as possible for the ventilation and filtration system.
- **Movement protocols within facilities:** Develop clear movement protocols to avoid crowding, maintain cohorts, and minimize unnecessary person-to-person interactions. These protocols should include a plan for arrival and dismissal times, transitions between classes, and bathroom breaks, as well as outlining one-way movement pathways for hallways and cafeterias.

## Communicating facilities-related changes

**Schools should develop a comprehensive approach to communications with educators, staff, students, families, and other community members.**

While strong communication is always important, the ever-changing circumstances related to COVID-19 make an effective, multi-faceted communication plan essential to districts. We have highlighted some initial communication topics below for facilities, but each district should identify additional topics as needed:

- **Summary of major facility changes** (e.g., installation of additional handwashing and hand sanitizing stations, installation of barriers, configuration of classroom desks) to promote a healthy and safe return to school
- **Guidance for health and safety protocols** expected from students and staff (e.g., frequent handwashing, maintaining physical distance, following one-way directions in hallways, limiting use of bathrooms during high-traffic periods etc.). Create and use visual cues and posters to communicate, especially with younger students.
- **Food services and distribution** changes to emphasize individually packaged foods and use of disposable cups or water bottles, as well as changes in remote meal offerings from spring and summer programs
- **Visitor protocols** for parents and guardians
- **Arrival and dismissal protocols** related to pick-up and drop-off
- **Medical waiting room procedures** in case a student experiences COVID-19 symptoms

## Informing students, families, and staff to ensure alignment and adherence to guidance

Districts should develop a series of information sessions for staff, students, and families to share information on new school protocols and roles and responsibilities and to answer questions. . To help with the development of this information, DESE will provide reference materials and examples as we are able, including some best practice examples. Below, we have highlighted some initial topics that should be shared:

- All health and safety protocols (e.g., wearing masks, hand hygiene, shared items, transitions, medical waiting room)
- Proper use of masks and other PPE
- Facility operations changes, including hallway movement, locker use
- Proper cleaning and disinfecting procedures
- Food services and distribution procedures
- Arrival and dismissal procedures

## Facilities and operations planning checklist

Each district and school should develop a facilities and operations plan to ensure effective implementation of health and safety guidance. This plan should include the following key areas:

- Prepare spaces in the facilities:** Develop plans to prepare the following spaces prior to the start of the school year.
  - Student learning spaces
  - Staff office set-up
  - Mask break spaces
  - Student eating areas
  - Medical waiting room
  - Entry and exit points
  - Storage and disposal of unnecessary furniture or other items
- Make modifications to facilities and building systems as feasible:** Develop plans to ensure set-up of additional fixtures and appropriate modifications to the existing physical infrastructure.
  - Handwashing and hand sanitizing stations
  - Ventilation and HVAC systems
  - Hallways
  - Bathrooms
  - Water fountains
  - Lockers
  - Signage throughout the building
- Develop operational protocols:** Develop operations plans to align all staff, families, students, and visitors on expected healthy behaviors and precautions.
  - Cleaning and disinfecting
  - Food preparation and distribution
  - Movement in the facility
  - Arrival and dismissal of students
  - Sharing items
  - Visitor and volunteer engagement
  - Using the medical waiting room
- Develop communication protocols**
- Inform students, families, staff, and visitors to ensure alignment and adherence to guidance**

## Preparing spaces

### Learning spaces

We acknowledge that districts and schools face individual constraints and each school building presents unique features and layouts (i.e., furniture, storage, classroom size and shape). To inform this guidance, we conducted classroom visits and set up model classrooms to derive options for districts to consider. Further examples and details are in Appendix A.

- **Space inventory:** Create a list of all classrooms, large spaces (such as auditoriums or libraries), and additional spaces that could be used for student activities, including outdoor areas, certain corridors, etc.
- **Measure spaces:** Know the dimensions of each space. If available, obtain building plans to understand square footage. These plans might be available from your district offices or the architectural and engineering firms that worked on the building. If the dimensions are not available on the building plans or if those are difficult to work with, you may need to manually measure spaces. This will only have to be done once for those classrooms and spaces that are the same size and can help with assessing different space use variations.
- **Clear spaces:** Clear classrooms and other spaces in the school building (auditorium, library, etc.) of any non-essential items or furniture to maximize available space. Keep only what is truly essential in each room, as every additional item that remains could displace a student. As it is recommended to limit shared items or supplies between individuals, consider what items may no longer be used in the class and what items may now need to be available on an individual basis.
- **Outdoor spaces:** As feasible, consider the use of outdoor spaces for classes, breaks, meals, and other activities. Some jurisdictions have considered tents, platforms, and other not-permanent structures in spaces adjacent to buildings, such as courtyards, play areas and parking lots.
- **‘Off campus’ spaces:** Review community and municipal spaces with local stakeholders to determine if other buildings are available to provide additional classroom space.
- **Design to maximize space:** Map out each space to optimize for student learning, based on the sample diagrams and parametric tool in Appendix A. The medically-advised minimum distance allowed is 3 feet from seat edge to seat edge. Desks should face in the same direction. There is no maximum number for group size, so long as schools adhere to the physical distancing requirements. Six feet of physical distance is required when people are not wearing masks (e.g. eating or mask breaks). All students should have assigned seating in each class and, to the extent feasible, for eating, mask breaks, and other activities.
- **Reconfigure spaces:** Consider using temporary walls or dividers to break up large areas into smaller classrooms, separate cohorts for meals, or structure other activities. In elementary and preschool classrooms, the classroom and “stations” can be set up to create natural physical distancing. Some jurisdictions are considering installing temporary floor-to-ceiling walls to maximize cohorts in larger spaces. Be mindful that temporary barriers may not block sound as well as permanent walls.

- **Fire code and safety:** Throughout planning, schools and districts should be aware of their fire code and building safety guidelines as they work to maximize space within buildings. Ensure that desks are not blocking means of egress in the event of an emergency and that desks are adequately spaced from radiators or other heating or cooling elements. Avoid obstructing means of egress if you are storing items in hallways. If appropriate, consider propping open doors to improve air circulation and reduce the number of times people touch door handles.
- **Plexiglass barriers: There are pros and cons to the use of plexiglass barriers.** In general, we do not recommend setting up plexiglass barriers in regular classrooms, since they represent an additional high-risk surface to clean and disinfect. However, barrier use is permitted if classroom furniture cannot be replaced and if required physical distancing cannot be achieved without the use of barriers, such as in shared table or laboratory settings where there is limited capacity and desks are often heavy or immovable. *Additional considerations for barrier use in laboratory spaces can be found in Appendix B.*

### **Considerations for early childhood and younger elementary classrooms:**

- Remove all soft and cloth-based materials, such as rugs, pillows, stuffed animals, and dress-up clothing. Children can bring their own stuffed animal, but it cannot be shared.
- In lieu of forcing young children to sit continuously at desks, consider making laminated mats with children’s pictures. Washable mats, plastic trays, and other items which can be easily cleaned can be used to define space for each student.
- **Learning centers:** Instead of having different small groups of children (three to four, depending on space available) rotate among different learning spaces as they engage in different activities, consider having each small cohort remain in one location and have materials for the next “center” brought to them.
- **Marking spaces:** Consider marking spaces with footprints facing the correct direction the children’s feet would be pointing to indicate one way in and one way out.

### **Staff office spaces**

- **Reconfigure spaces:** Rearrange furniture to support physical distancing, with staff desks facing in the same direction when possible.
- **Staff break rooms:** Rearrange furniture to support physical distancing and consider adjusting staff schedules to limit the number of individuals in the room at one time.
- **Barrier use:** Consider setting up barriers (e.g., plexiglass shielding) in high traffic areas or areas where physical distancing between staff cannot be achieved. Design the cleaning schedule to ensure proper cleaning and disinfecting of barriers by custodial staff.<sup>1</sup>

### **Spaces for mask breaks**

- **Purpose:** It is recommended that students have at least two mask breaks per day (e.g. mealtime and recess). If additional mask breaks are scheduled, identify what spaces (ideally outdoors) will be used.
- **Requirements:** Spaces for mask breaks must allow students to be at least 6 feet apart. Consider using tape or other markers to identify where students should be to maintain 6 feet of separation. Hand washing facilities or hand sanitizer must be available upon entering and leaving this space. Provide napkins or paper towels for masks to be set on (inside face up) when removed. Consider adding signage in mask break areas on how to properly put on and take off masks. As mask wearing is recommended for children younger than second grade, it is important to note that these students may need additional mask breaks during the day.

### Medical waiting room

- **Purpose:** This is a separate space from the nurse's office or the regular space for providing medical care. It may be located near a nurse's or other health related office. The medical waiting room will be used when a student presenting COVID-19 symptoms needs to be separated. From a facilities perspective, every effort should be made to find a self-contained space, ideally near an exit/entrance and with a dedicated bathroom.
- **Staffing:** When occupied, the medical waiting room should always be monitored by appropriate staff.
- **Masks required:** Masks are always strictly required in this space, even for students in kindergarten and grade 1. The individual supervising this space must always maintain 6 feet of physical distance, remain masked, and wear a face shield or goggles. Be sure to have face shields or appropriate goggles available to staff. Personal protective equipment guidance recommends that nurses or other staff in this area be equipped with N-95 masks. If a student is unable to wear a mask, there should be no other students in this room.
- **Hand hygiene:** Hand washing facilities or hand sanitizer needs to be used when entering and leaving the space, as well as before and after eating.
- **Food/drink:** If any food or drink must be consumed before the student is picked up, the individual should be walked outside to consume food or drink if possible (because mask will have to be taken off for eating). If not possible to go outside, one student can consume food or drink at a time in the medical waiting room, but, again, only if all others remain at least 6 feet away.
- **Ventilation:** When possible, this space should have windows that open and exhaust directly into the outdoors. Depending upon the facility, other options should be explored to increase ventilation to this area and/or otherwise improve the air filtration.
- **Size:** This space should be large enough to accommodate several individuals at least 6 feet apart. All people in the COVID-19 waiting room must be as far apart as possible and no less than 6 feet apart, even when masked.

### Entry and exit points

- **Arrival to school:**
  - Prioritize overall safety considerations, (e.g. child welfare, preventing intruders)

- and weapons) in planning school arrival/exit.
- As practical, consider assigning multiple entry points or staggering arrival times to avoid crowding in entry areas.
- Post appropriate signage and reminders about the health and safety requirements that everyone needs to follow.<sup>2</sup>
- Ensure hand washing or sanitization is available upon entry, as well as appropriate disposal containers.
- Ensure that all students, staff, and visitors, with noted exceptions for medical needs, are wearing masks covering their nose and mouth.
- Ensure that additional masks are available at the entry as may be necessary.
- Consider having staff monitor entry to ensure everyone properly disinfects their hands and is wearing masks.
- While there are no screening procedures required at the point of entry, school staff should observe students throughout the day and refer students who may be symptomatic to the school healthcare point of contact.<sup>3</sup>
- **Limit contact with doors:** If allowed by school safety guidelines, consider keeping doors propped open during entry/exit times if constantly monitored. Consider installing touchless doors as feasible.
- **Dismissal from school:** Consider designating multiple exit points, staggering dismissal times, and monitoring handwashing or hand sanitization upon exit. Before students are dismissed, confirm they have gathered all personal belongings before leaving, especially those that require cleaning at home. *Additional details on pick-up and drop-off protocols can be found in the Transportation Guidance.*

## Recess

- **Hand hygiene:** Hand washing facilities or hand sanitizer needs to be used upon entering and leaving recess space.
- **Cohorting:** Consider designating outdoor spaces to separate cohorts and support physical distancing while still providing recess opportunities.<sup>4</sup>
- **Cleaning and disinfecting:** When possible, clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces made of plastic or metal between cohort use.
- **Masking:** If students are outdoors and maintain a distance of at least 6 feet, consider using recess as an unmasked time. Otherwise, monitor for adherence to masking requirements and at least 3 feet of distancing.
- **Activities:** Playgrounds can be used with staff monitoring to ensure physical distancing and masking. Consider whether the number of staff at recess will need to be increased. Additional staff may be needed during high-risk times (the beginning and end of recess) and in high-risk locations (enclosed or small, hard-to-see places on fixed equipment, or anywhere with high child density).<sup>5</sup>

## Storage and disposal

- **Storage of furniture and other items:** Given the critical need for space and in order to move furniture and non-essential items, districts may need to use storage pods or other spaces in the community. Districts could also consider renting storage space temporarily.

- **Storage for cleaning supplies:** Adequate storage space should be allocated for cleaning supplies and disinfectants, and it should be accessible only to staff. [More information on storing cleaning supplies and disinfectants is available in this EPA resource.](#)

## 2. Making systems and other space use modifications

### Handwashing and hand sanitizing stations

Handwashing removes pathogens from the surface of the hands. While handwashing with soap and water is the best option, alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropanol) may be utilized when handwashing is not available.<sup>6 7</sup>

Provide handwashing or hand sanitizing stations in the following common areas and ensure there are enough supplies (soap and sanitizer) at all times to accommodate frequent hand washing and sanitizing:

- All entries and exits
- In bathrooms
- In classrooms
- In libraries and shared activity spaces
- Next to meal distribution and consumption areas
- Next to water fountains that require touch to operate
- Next to mask break areas (if additional mask break areas are identified)

Given the importance of maximizing handwashing and sanitization stations, it may be permissible to have students within 3 feet of distance for a brief period of time (20 seconds) during hand washing as long as masks are worn and students are not directly facing one another. This will permit all sinks in a bathroom to be used even if closer than 3 feet apart, for example.

### Ventilation and HVAC systems

Appropriate mask usage remains the best defense against all forms of respiratory transmission. Schools can further mitigate airborne transmission by increasing outdoor air ventilation or filtering air that is recirculating within a room or building. From a facilities and operations perspective, it is important to determine the best approach for each school site given differences in ventilation capabilities.

While there have been many schools built over the past decade with similar building plans and operating systems, most schools have different ventilation and HVAC systems and capabilities. From a facilities perspective, this means it is important to understand the opportunities and challenges unique to your building.

- For buildings that have facility-wide HVAC systems, it is likely that you will also have a contact or contract with experts to help maximize ventilation and filtration.
- For other buildings, this guidance is meant to provide you with direction and to answer key questions.

- If you have specific questions about ventilation and HVAC, please contact Matt Deninger at [Matthew.J.Deninger@mass.gov](mailto:Matthew.J.Deninger@mass.gov) or 781-338-3117.

### **Prepare ventilation systems**

- **Clean ventilation system:** Ensure the school ventilation system is properly cleaned.
- **Run HVAC systems:** Operate HVAC systems with outside air dampers open for a minimum period of one week prior to reopening schools.
- **Consider upgrading filters:** In buildings with mechanical ventilation systems, consider upgrading filters to increased efficiency ratings.<sup>8</sup> Schools that are not able to upgrade filters may explore alternative ways to improve ventilation (e.g., through open windows), if appropriate for their system.

### **Increase outdoor air ventilation**

- **Adjust HVAC settings:** Some mechanical ventilation systems can forcibly bring outdoor air inside and then distribute that fresh air to different areas of the building. If possible with the site's HVAC system, adjust settings to increase the flow of outdoor air. If your system can do this, evaluate the impact of adjusting windows or doors manually, as they may negatively impact the system itself.
- **Open windows or doors (when appropriate and safe):** For facilities without the above HVAC capability, evaluate the options to open windows and doors when safe to do so, as well as the feasibility of increasing outdoor air intake with fan boxes in windows.
- **Prevent or minimize air recirculation:** Facilities staff should evaluate how to eliminate or minimize air recirculation in their HVAC systems to the extent possible.<sup>9</sup>
- **Maintain ventilation for longer hours:** If possible, schools should leave ventilation systems running longer than normal. Ideally, ventilation systems would run continuously, but it is recommended they run at least two hours before and after school, as there may still be individuals in the building (students or staff).<sup>10</sup>

### **Indoor spaces without windows**

- For any spaces without windows that may be used for student activities, special attention must be made to ensure that there are adequate HVAC capabilities for the space.
- Otherwise, indoor spaces without windows and adequate HVAC should not be used or only used as may be appropriate for storage or similar uses.

### **Hallways**

- **Create standard routes:** Outline a plan for hallway use to minimize congestion. When possible, make hallways one-directional to prevent students from directly passing each other. This is especially important for small hallways. Ensure that stairwells are also properly marked and one-directional. Staff should reinforce these directions, adherence to physical distancing, and masking. Schools should test emergency evacuation protocols and carefully communicate any relevant changes.

- **Close off certain hallways:** Consider closing off hallways or areas that are too narrow for proper physical distancing and unable to be one-directional.
- **Stagger class transitions:** Develop a plan for transitions between classes to avoid crowding in hallways. Consider dismissing students grade-by-grade or according to other cohort models. Consider identifying facility monitors or class monitors to ensure students wear masks, maintain distance, and do not linger in the hallway.

## Bathrooms

- **Hand dryers:** Consider replacing hand dryers with disposable towels, as hand dryers increase the flow of air particles in the bathroom.<sup>11 12 13</sup>
- **Touchless technology:** Place a trash can and paper towels by the bathroom door to allow students and staff to avoid touching door handles directly. If possible, consider installing touchless technology in the bathroom equipment (e.g. hand soap, paper towel dispensers, automatic doors).
- **Ventilation:** When feasible, open windows in bathrooms that do not pose a safety or privacy risk and if not against HVAC system standards.
- **Bathroom use:** Consider not allowing students to use the bathroom during transition times, and otherwise using a bathroom sign out system to reduce the number of students in bathrooms at one time. Ensure that students use their own writing instruments for the sign out log.

## Lockers

- **Limit usage:** Consider suspending the use of lockers. If lockers are needed, stagger access times and monitor students for masking and physical distancing.
- **Shared lockers:** Sharing lockers is not recommended but is allowed if access can be staggered and there is a minimum of 3 feet separating the lockers used at one time.

## Signage

Ensure clear and age-appropriate signage is posted in highly visible locations throughout school property, reminding students and staff to follow proper health and safety protocols. Example signage on [how to wear masks](#) and [reminders to wash hands](#) are provided by both the DPH and CDC. Signage should be translated into a language understood by each student. Signage should be posted in the following key areas (non-exhaustive):

- **By handwashing and hand sanitizing stations:** To remind individuals of the proper way to clean and sanitize hands
- **In bathrooms:** To remind individuals to properly clean and sanitize hands, utilize no-touch solutions as much as possible
- **By entry/exits:** To remind students to wear masks and maintain physical distance
- **By eating areas:** Use markers to map out entry/exit flow for students, to space out lines for students picking up their meals, and to identify distancing between students as they eat. Post signs to remind students to avoid sharing food, utensils, and drinks
- **By mask break areas:** To remind individuals to maintain 6 feet of physical distance and

to follow correct mask removal procedure

- **In classrooms:** To remind individuals of physical distancing, reduce sharing of items, and keep masks on
- **Around playgrounds:** To encourage physical distancing while outside and maintain cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch areas
- **In hallways:** Use well-marked lines on the floor to encourage physical distancing and indicate direction of travel, especially in small hallways. Include signage to encourage healthy behaviors (e.g., wearing of masks)
- **Next to frequently shared equipment:** Post signs to remind students and staff to wipe down frequently shared equipment (e.g., computers and keyboards) before and after use
- **Areas where queuing may occur:** Use well-marked lines on the floor to encourage physical distancing
- **By closed areas:** Mark off closed areas

### 3. Developing operational protocols

#### School cleaning and disinfecting

Although it is not the main way the virus spreads, it may be possible for an individual to get COVID-19 by touching an object that is contaminated and then touching their own mouth, nose or possibly eyes.<sup>14</sup> Ensure facilities are properly cleaned and disinfected each day following the guidelines below:

- **Frequency:** Cleaning and disinfecting should occur at least daily for shared spaces and furniture. For high-touch surfaces (e.g., door handles, light switches, water fountains, toilet seats) cleaning and disinfecting should occur three to four times per day and/or between uses.
  - **Desks:** Desks should be cleaned at least daily. For situations when cohorts of students move between classrooms or where meals are eaten at desks, cleaning of desks must take place between classes and before and after meals. Cleaning of desks can be done by students or custodial staff. Carefully choose disinfectant solutions that require a short dwell or drying time and are appropriate with food surfaces.
  - **Electronics:** Consider putting a flat, wipeable cover on electronics that are difficult to clean (e.g., keyboards). Follow manufacturer's instruction to determine the appropriate disinfectant solution and how to properly clean and disinfect. If there is no guidance, use alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 60 percent ethanol or 70 percent isopropanol.<sup>15</sup> If shared, electronics must be cleaned between use by students or custodial staff.
  - **Outdoor play areas:** High-touch surfaces made of plastic or metal should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily or between use by custodial staff.
- **Responsibility:** Dedicated custodial staff should handle all disinfection requiring chemicals for facilities (e.g., classrooms, bathrooms, mask break areas) and high-touch

objects (e.g., door handles, light switches, water fountains). For other surfaces, determine cleaning responsibility on a case-by-case basis. For shared and high-touch items such as desks, cleaning responsibility may be shared by students, if the task is age appropriate and safe.

- **Disinfectant solutions:** To select the proper disinfectant, review the suggested list on the [EPA website](#). Consider using an alcohol solution with at least 60 percent ethanol or 70 percent isopropanol, a diluted bleach solution (if prepared daily to ensure efficacy), or an EPA-approved disinfectant unless otherwise instructed by the manufacturer's instructions. When selecting a disinfectant solution, consider the dwell time, which surfaces are used as eating surfaces, and the potential risk of triggering asthma symptoms for sensitive individuals.
- **Mask disposal:** If a reusable mask breaks and needs to be thrown out or if a single-use mask needs to be disposed of, it should be placed into the nearest trash can by the individual who wore the mask. The individual should immediately put on a new mask after washing their hands.

### Shared items

- **Limit sharing:** Sharing materials is discouraged, but when shared, they must be cleaned before being used by other students.<sup>16</sup>
  - To the extent possible, limit sharing of electronic devices, toys, games, learning aids, art material and other items that are difficult to clean or disinfect.<sup>17</sup> Limit the use of supplies and equipment to one group of children at a time, and clean and disinfect items between uses.
  - Library books may be checked out if students clean their hands before and after use and if students only select books from the shelves, instead of the return area.<sup>18</sup> Books and other paper-based materials are not considered a high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning procedures.<sup>19</sup>
  - Identify and develop new classroom protocols that reduce passing supplies or items between students.
- **Hand hygiene:** Frequent hand washing or sanitizing, including before and after using shared materials, is an important control strategy that should be reinforced when objects and materials will be shared.
- **Purchase additional items:** Consider what supplies might need to be available on an individual basis, and purchase additional items to minimize sharing (e.g., assigning each student their own art supplies), as feasible.
- **Storage:** Keep each student's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or areas. Similar to locker usage, make sure to stagger access to these areas to maintain physical distancing if used. Additional guidance on sharing protocols is forthcoming.

### Food service operations

**Eating areas for students:** As students will be unmasked to eat, there is a strict requirement of 6 feet of physical distance between each student. Based on current CDC recommendations, it is

preferable for students to eat in classroom spaces. This may not be feasible for all sites, given classroom sizes, room scheduling, and physical distancing requirements. Schools may need to explore alternative options for students to eat their meals. Our prioritized recommendation includes the following options.<sup>20</sup>

- **Eating in the classroom:** Based on CDC recommendations, it is preferable for students to eat in classroom spaces. Meals can be delivered to classrooms, or students can bring food back from the cafeteria to eat. Schools may consider having half of the class take an outdoor mask break or recess time while the other half eats and then switching these groups to enable 6 feet of distancing. Additional staff may be needed to supervise, as the students are in two separate spaces in this model. The desks and other surfaces that students are using for meals should be cleaned between groups. Cleaning includes using an [approved EPA disinfectant](#) on these surfaces and then appropriately disposing of the materials used to wipe down the surfaces. Custodial staff or students may perform this surface cleaning, if appropriate.
- **Eating in the cafeteria:** If a single large lunchroom is to be used for eating (and is not utilized for classroom space), clearly mark spaces where cohorts and students can sit. Students must maintain 6 feet of distance when unmasked unless plexiglass barriers are used to separate students. Ensure that students do not mingle with other cohorts. The tables and other surfaces that students are using for meals should be cleaned between groups. Cleaning includes using an [approved EPA disinfectant](#) and then appropriately disposing of the materials used to wipe down the surfaces. Custodial staff or students may perform this surface cleaning, if appropriate. *Please refer to Appendix C for further details and considerations on utilizing cafeteria space.*
- **Eating in alternative spaces:** Outdoor meal consumption can be an effective way to ensure physical distancing, weather permitting. Consider other available spaces as well that will not obstruct egress or create other fire code issues. For example, use of hallways for mealtime may be possible depending on hallway width. Half of the students could eat their lunch in the classroom, with strict 6 foot distancing in place. The other half could eat in the hallway on benches or chairs, with 6 feet of distance between each student. The benches and other surfaces that students are using for meals should be cleaned between groups. Cleaning includes using an [approved EPA disinfectant](#) and then appropriately disposing of the materials used to wipe down the surfaces. Custodial staff or students may perform this surface cleaning, if appropriate.

### **Food preparation and serving space and related protocols**

- **Evaluate kitchen workstations:** Modify stations for physical distancing. If the kitchen is small, consider moving workstations into larger areas. Face workstations in the same direction or against the wall.
- **Stagger service staff:** For large food service staff, consider having the staff work in cohort-based schedules to reduce opportunities for transmission.
- **Ensure food continuity:** Consider methods for ensuring continuity of food service operations if food service staff become sick. This could include setting up coverage from other schools within the district or purchasing a supply of shelf-stable meals.
- **Receiving deliveries:** Work with kitchen staff and vendors to determine safer ways to

handle deliveries given COVID-19 considerations. Mark entrances where deliveries will be handled, and schedule deliveries in a way that reduces crowding. If the vendor plans to drop deliveries outside and reduce the number of visitors inside the building, consider investing in dollies or assisting kitchen staff with moving deliveries to avoid workplace injuries.

- **Ensure food safety training:** Ensure that food service staff and substitutes have food safety training. Review current food safety plans and revise as needed. Free web-based food safety resources include:
  - [John Stalker Institute Food Allergy Resources](#)
  - [Breakfast in the Classroom operational and safety protocols](#)
  - [School Food Service Safety Precautions for School Nutrition Professionals](#)
  - [Massachusetts Food Safety and Education Safe Bag Lunches:](#)
  - [CDC Food and Coronavirus](#)

### Preparation and distribution

- **Health and safety requirements:** Adjust food preparation and service procedures to minimize shared items (i.e. serving utensils), maintain physical distance, and comply with health and safety regulations.<sup>21</sup> Detailed guidance on safe food preparation can be found in Massachusetts' [Safety Standards and Checklist: Restaurants](#).
- **Individually packaged meals:** Adjust food offerings to provide individually packaged, to-go style lunches, instead of buffet style served directly to students. Consider developing non-contact pre-payment systems for schools when offering individually packaged meals, if feasible. Consider establishing incentives for prepayment of meals.
- **Schedule and distribution:** Establish a meal serving schedule and distribution process that limits interactions between classrooms and contamination of food items or meal distribution areas. For instance, schools may schedule classroom deliveries or set times for each classroom to pick up their meals from a central location. Meal distribution should limit high-touch surfaces and exclude buffet style serving. If meals are delivered to the classroom, consider how students can pre-order meals to ensure the correct number of meals are delivered to the class each day. Consider how to return meal service materials (i.e. carts, trays) to a central location each day.<sup>22</sup>
- **Special dietary accommodations:** Ensure new menus offer meal accommodations for special dietary needs. Ensure these meals are clearly marked and transported without risk for cross-contamination to alternative points of service. Communicate special dietary accommodations to staff distributing meals to ensure student safety and privacy.
- **Non-essential food distribution:** Consider closing non-essential food distribution, such as school stores or vending machines to limit eating or food preparation outside of set breakfast and lunch times. Discontinue the use of any self-service food or beverage distribution in the cafeteria.

### Meal consumption

- **Masks:** Ensure proper removal and placement of masks before eating. Masks should be removed by handing the ties or back/ear areas of the mask once seated. Do not touch the outside or inside of the part covering the face. While eating, masks should be placed on a napkin, paper towel, or other container on the table, with the inside of the mask facing up. Masks should be put back on before leaving the seat. More information is available [here](#).

- **Distancing:** Individuals must be at least 6 feet apart at all times when masks are removed.
- **Hand hygiene:** Individuals must properly wash or sanitize hands before and after eating.
- **Water fountain usage:** Schools must provide potable water to students during mealtimes. Touchless or motion activated fountains are preferred for reusable water bottles, but other fountains, water jugs, or coolers can be used with single-use cups if students wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after fountain use. **Water fountains cannot be used for direct consumption.** High-touch surfaces on water fountains, jugs or coolers should be cleaned multiple times a day. Schools may also consider providing disposable water bottles during mealtimes.
- **Food allergies:** Stay informed of student needs, including food allergies or any needed feeding assistance to enable safe meal service and clean up.
- **Food waste removal:** Work with nutrition and facilities staff to determine protocols for waste management. Additional garbage cans may be needed to accommodate food waste, especially if classroom spaces are used for meals. Consider how normal cleaning procedures and schedules may be affected by new processes. Consider how students can support clean-up, such as cleaning their own eating area after the meal, if age appropriate and safe to do so.

**Meals for remote learners:** Schools must continue to offer meals to eligible students who are learning remotely from home. Begin planning how to operate lunch, breakfast, and/or snack programs (as applicable) for students who will not be attending in-person school five days a week. *Additional guidance will be provided by DESE's Office for Food and Nutrition Programs.*

- **Communication:** Communicate with families on how remote meal processes will be different from this past spring.
- **Delivery Methods:** Begin planning for drive-through, delivery, curbside pick-up, or end of school day take-home meals (as appropriate) for students who are not attending in-person school five days a week. Meal distribution methods utilized this past spring, including parent pick-up, can be continued, including providing meals to cover multiple days.

### Visitors and volunteers

- **Reduce outside visitors or volunteers:** No outside visitors and volunteers are recommended, except for contracted service providers for the purpose of special education, required support services, or program monitoring as authorized by the school or district. Assign a staff member to enforce this protocol.
- **Single entry/exit:** Designate a single entry and exit point for all visitors and volunteers to be visually screened and logged in. For visitors who need to enter, they should first gain approval, be briefed on school COVID-19 policies, and verify they do not have symptoms. Ensure that these individuals all are wearing masks covering their nose and mouth at all times and are aware of any other health and safety protocols for the school.

- **Track visitor log:** A log of all visitors must be kept and maintained for 30 days, with the date, contact phone number, arrival/departure times, and areas visited within the building for each visit.
- **Minimize parent/family visits** and require them to occur only in the school office and/or outside spaces, if appropriate.
  - Visitors necessary for drop off or pick up must wear masks.
  - Schools should encourage only one guardian to visit a building when possible and continue to utilize virtual communication options with families (e.g., for parent-teacher conferences).<sup>23</sup>
  - It is recommended that the same adult drop off and pick up the child each day if it necessary that they enter the building.
- **Restrict visitor time:** Schools can also consider restricting visitor access to limited times when classes are in session (i.e., at times when there will not be many people in the hallways).<sup>24</sup>

## Appendix A: Maximizing school space

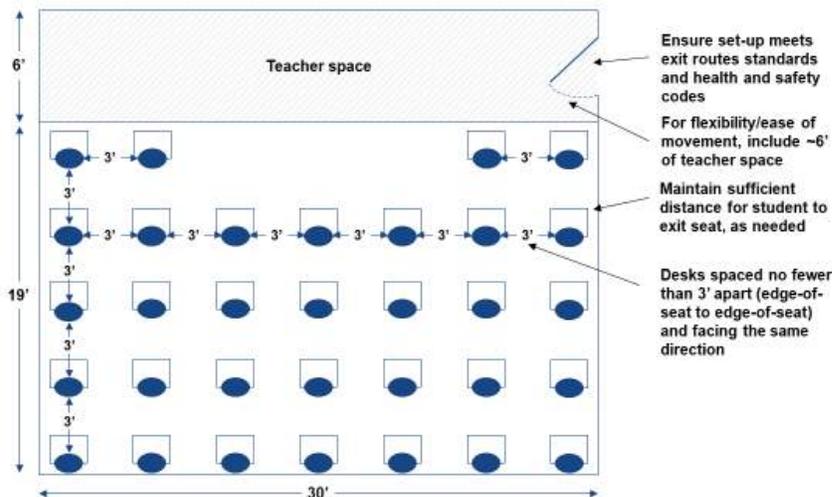
The diagrams below outline best practices for classroom setup in order to maximize capacity while adhering to health and safety requirements. We have included sample classroom diagrams, based on common desk dimensions and several classroom tours, that outline important considerations such as health and safety codes, teacher movement, and immovable furniture or equipment. We encourage schools to physically measure each classroom in addition to using [this parametric tool](#) to make sure that space is being maximized to the extent possible.

### Best Practices for Classroom Setup:

- **Physical distancing:** With masks, 3 feet is the minimum physical distancing. For planning purposes, this distance refers to the distance between seat edges. Spaces where masks are not worn (e.g. eating and mask break areas), 6 feet is the minimum physical distancing.
- **Teacher space:** Allow adequate **space for teachers** to ensure safe physical distance from students.
- **Furniture:** Consider **removing non-essential furniture** from classrooms. Explore **storage options** in advance.
- **Communal areas:** Consider **repurposing communal areas** for additional classrooms.
- **Other constraints:** When estimating capacity, consider additional constraints that reduce usable desk space (e.g., emergency fire egress, radiators, immovable furniture, desk/furniture size and type, camera angles for synchronous learning).

### Example A1: Fits ~32 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30'); with all furniture/equipment removed

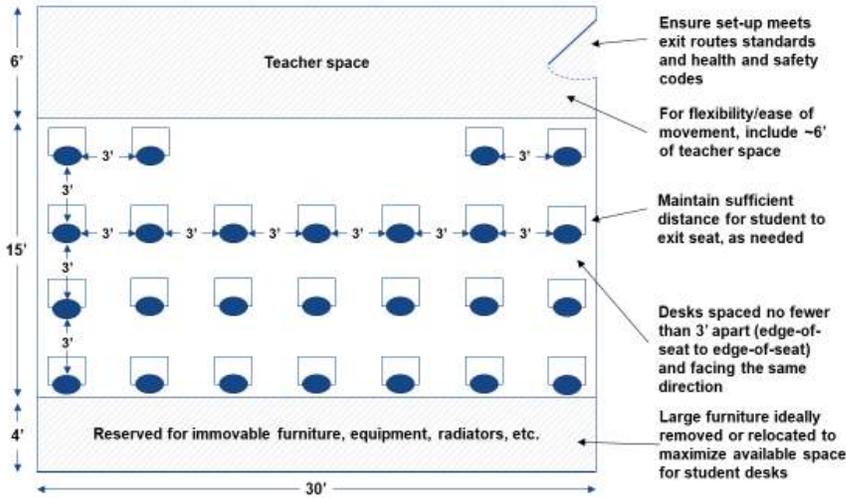


- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~32 students (with furniture/equipment removed)
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

## Example A2: Fits ~25 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30')



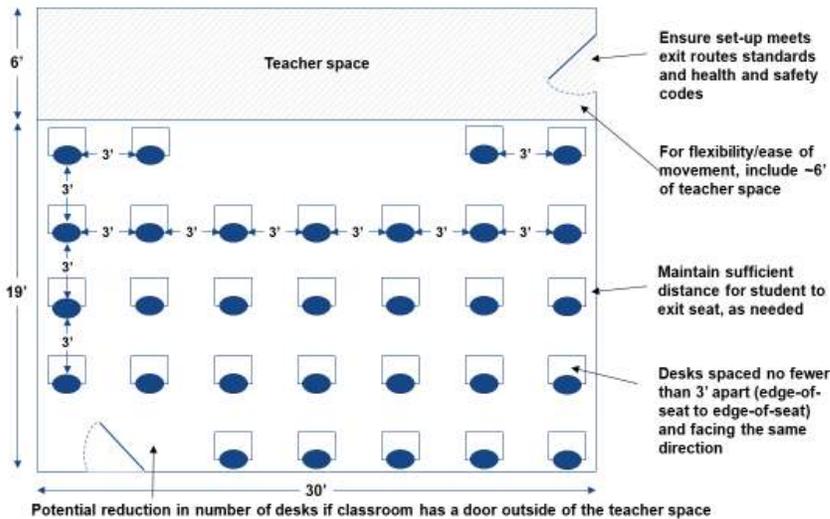
- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~25 students
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

2

## Example A3: Fits ~30 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30'); with all furniture/equipment removed



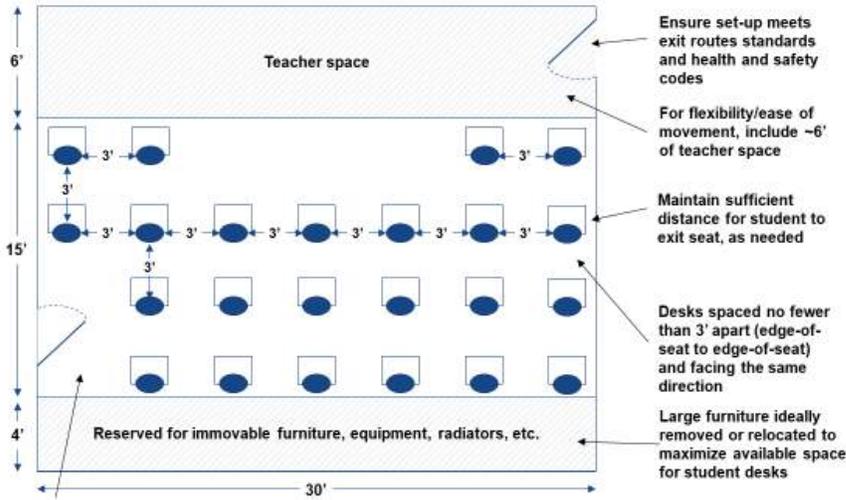
- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~30 students (with furniture/equipment removed)
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

3

### Example A4: Fits ~23 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30')



Potential reduction in number of desks if classroom has a door outside of the teacher space



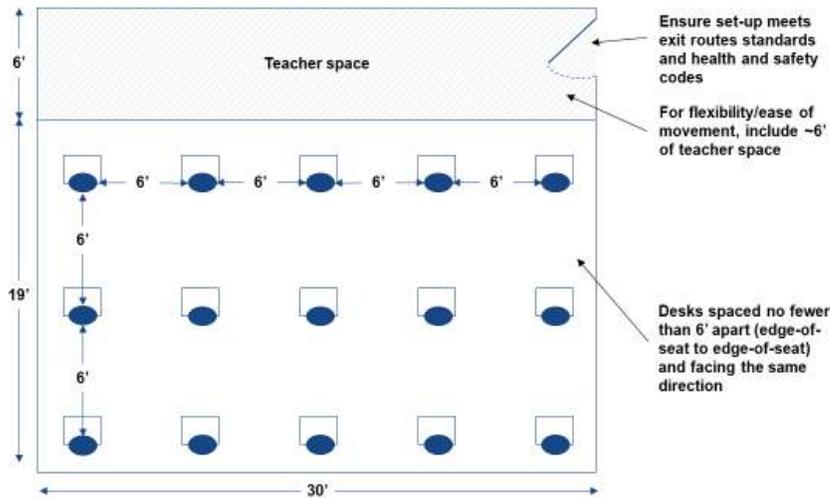
- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~23 students
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

4

### Example A5: Fits ~15 students with 6' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30')



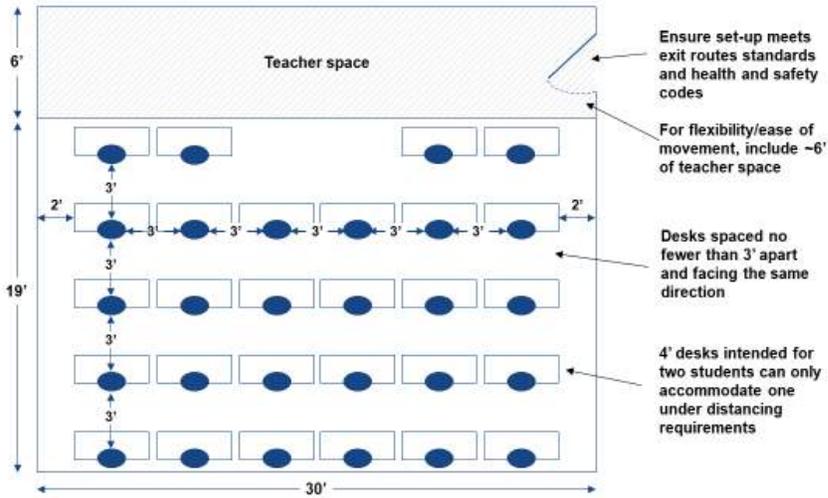
- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~15 students
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 6' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

6

### Example B1: Fits ~28 4' dual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30'); with all furniture/equipment removed



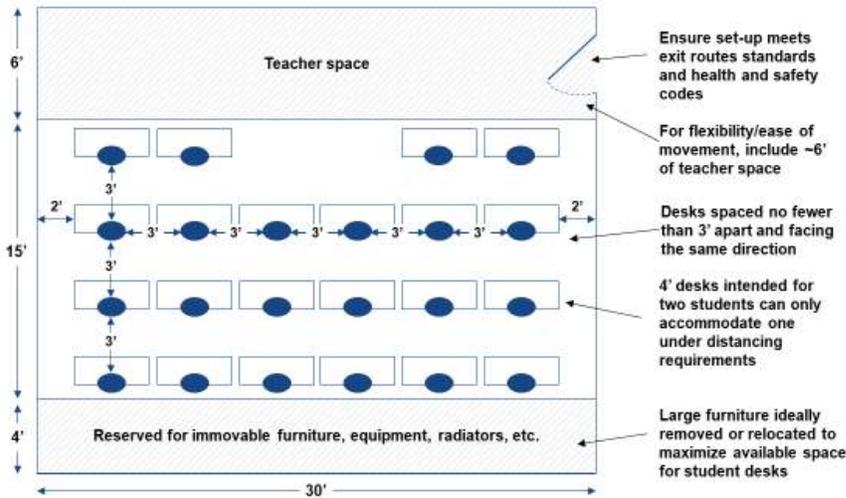
- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~28 students (with furniture/equipment removed)
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 4' desk width

6

### Example B2: Fits ~22 4' dual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30')



- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~22 students
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

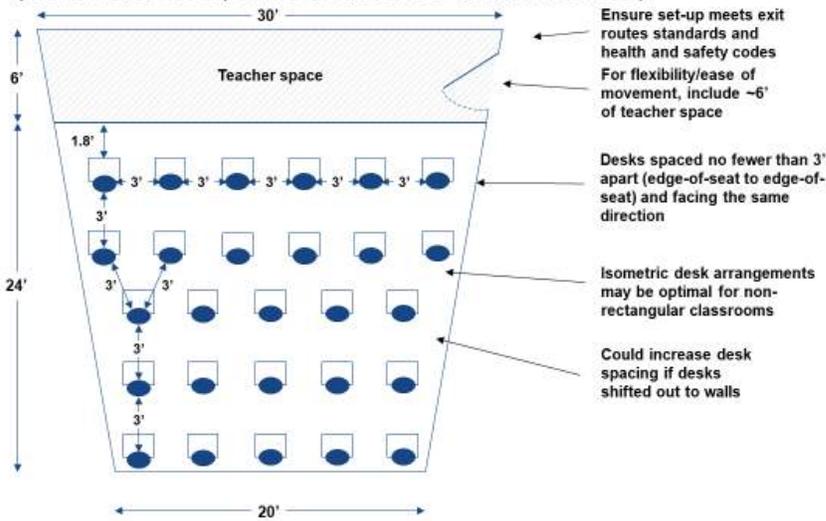
<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 4' desk width

7



## Example C1: Fits ~27 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 30' at widest / 20' at narrowest x 30')



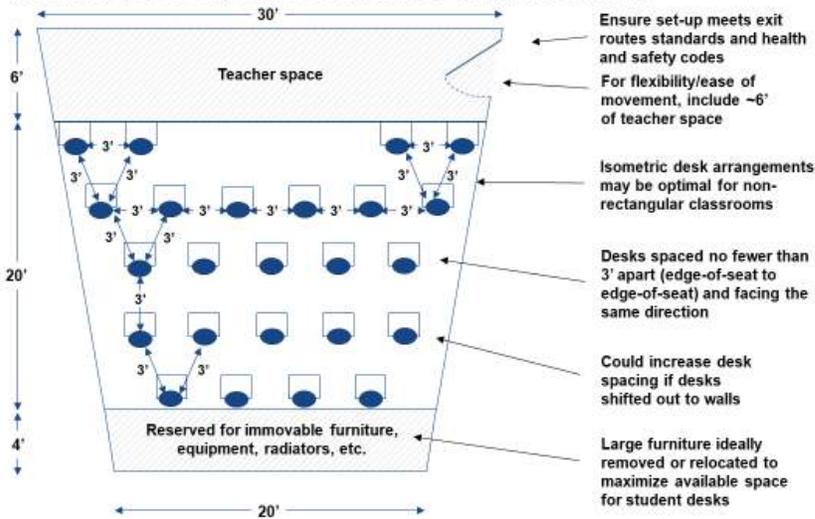
- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~27 students
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

10

## Example C2: Fits ~24 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 30' at widest / 20' at narrowest x 30')



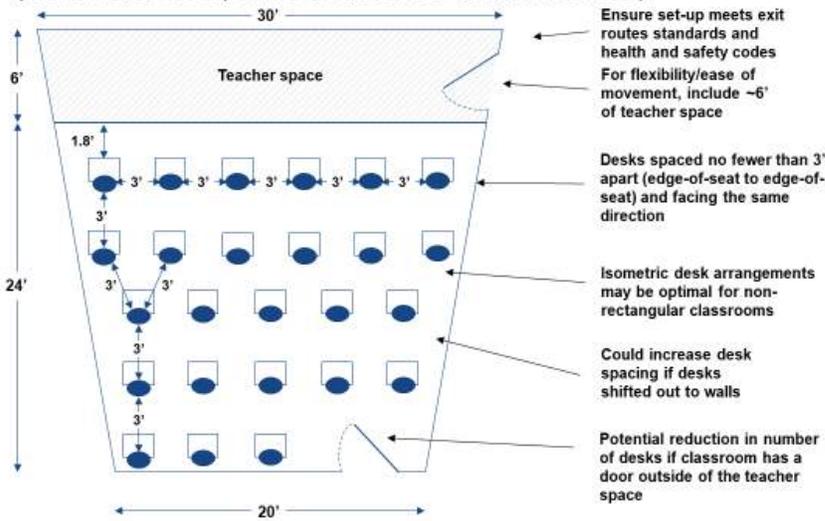
- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~24 students
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

11

## Example C1: Fits ~25 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 30' at widest / 20' at narrowest x 30')



- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~25 students
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

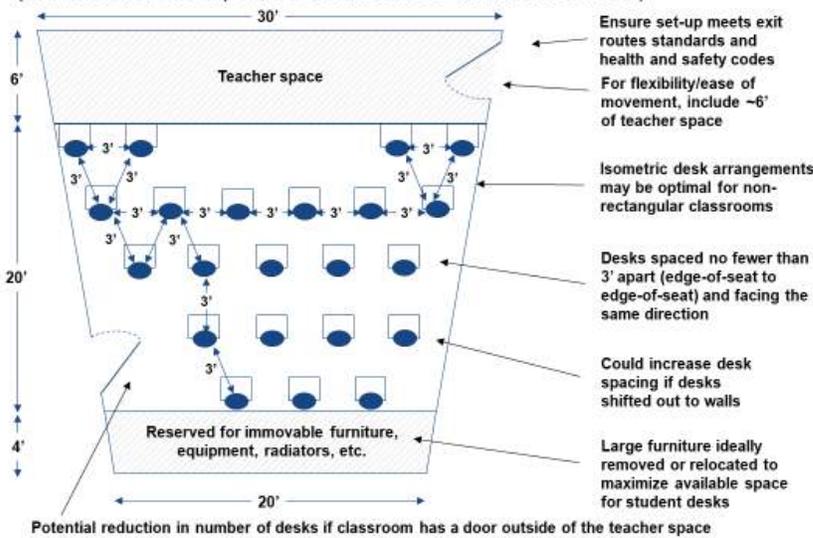
<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

12

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## Example C2: Fits ~22 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 30' at widest / 20' at narrowest x 30')



- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~22 students
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

13

DRAFT for discussion only

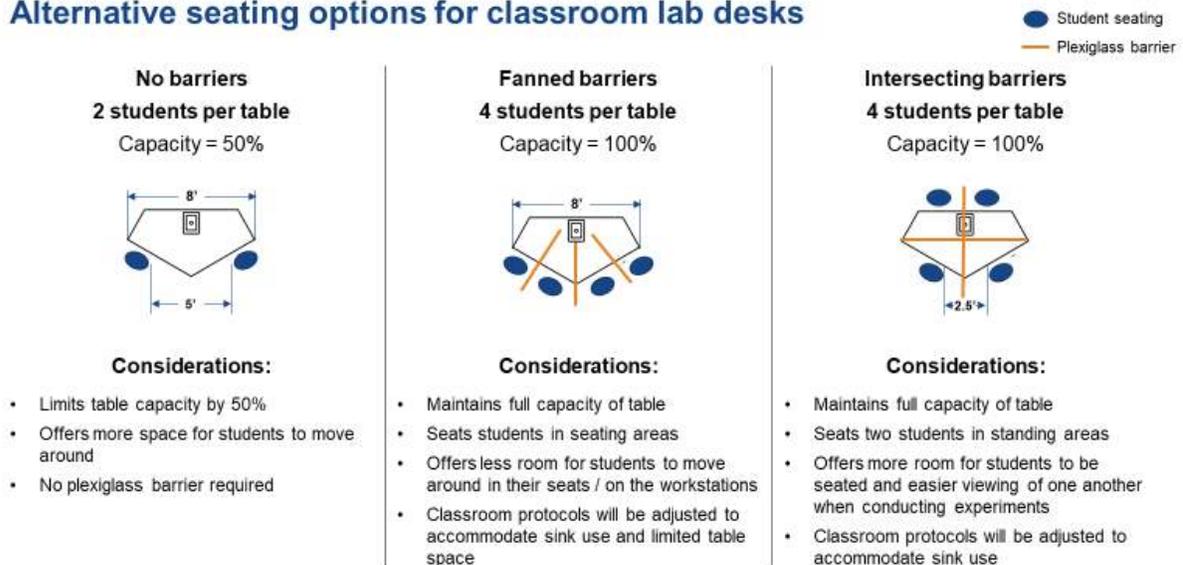
## Appendix B: Laboratory seating

The diagrams below outline options for laboratory seating in order to maximize capacity while adhering to health and safety requirements. Use the following guidelines and considerations when developing laboratory seating layouts. Work closely with teachers and administrators to comply with fire and safety codes and adjust curriculums as necessary to accommodate capacity and physical changes.

Plexiglass barriers:

- Usage: Barriers should only be used in laboratory settings where desks are unable to be moved or cannot be replaced with moveable desks.
- Height: Barriers should be tall enough to extend beyond a student's standing height
- Width: Barriers should extend at least one foot past the edge of the table and abide by fire and safety regulations
- Cleaning: Barriers should be properly cleaned between uses
- Rubber edges: Consider use of rubber edges to avoid risk of injury when plexiglass extends beyond tables
- Classroom protocols: Make sure that plexiglass barrier use is aligned to safety procedures and consider adjusting classroom experiments to avoid potential fire hazards

### Alternative seating options for classroom lab desks

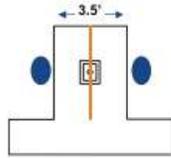


## Alternative seating options for perimeter lab desks

● Student seating  
— Plexiglass barrier

### 2 students per table

Capacity = 50%

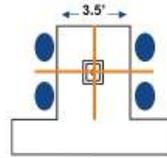


#### Considerations:

- Barrier usage enables students to face one another in this seating option
- Offers more space for students to move around
- Reduces total plexiglass usage
- Classroom protocols will be adjusted to accommodate sink use

### 4 students per table

Capacity = 100%



#### Considerations:

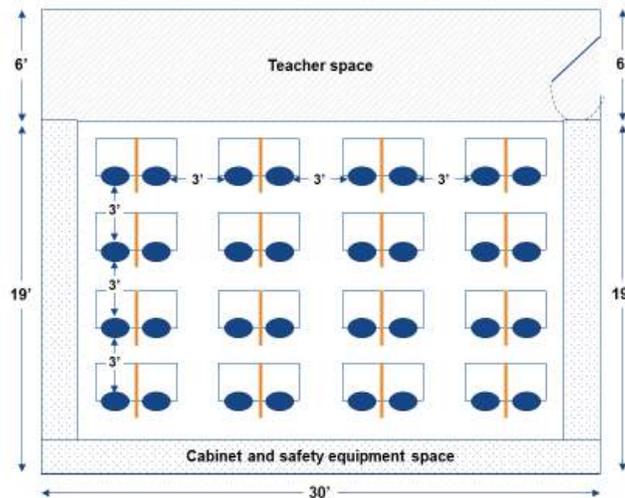
- Barrier usage enables students to face one another in this seating option, and be side-by-side
- Maintains full capacity of table
- Reduces room for students to move around
- Classroom protocols will be adjusted to accommodate sink use

15

## Alternative seating options for movable lab desks

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30'; laboratory safety equipment space included but not pictured)

● Student seating  
— Plexiglass barrier



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## Appendix C: Cafeteria seating

The diagrams below outline options for cafeteria seating based on four common cafeteria tables. Use the following guidelines and considerations to determine the most feasible way to utilize cafeteria space (e.g., for classrooms or for eating). Work closely with facility departments to comply with fire and safety codes.

Considerations for plexiglass barriers:

- Usage: Barriers may be used to increase cafeteria capacity during meals.
- Height: Barriers should be tall enough to extend beyond a student's standing height
- Width: Barriers should extend at least one foot past the edge of the table and abide by fire and safety regulations
- Cleaning: Barriers should be properly cleaned between uses
- Rubber edges: Consider use of rubber edges to avoid risk of injury when plexiglass extends beyond tables
- Classroom protocols: Make sure that plexiglass barrier use is aligned to safety procedures and consider adjusting classroom experiments to avoid potential fire hazards

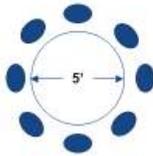
### Cafeteria seating diagrams – 5' round tables

All cafeteria seating should come with extra enforcement of rules and monitoring for symptoms

● Student seating  
— Plexiglass barrier

#### 5' round tables

Normal capacity: 8 people

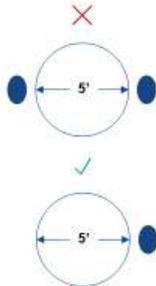


#### Option A

No Barrier

Capacity = 12.5%

Standard round table will not be able to properly seat more than 1 student

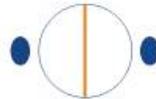


#### Option B

2 students, 1 barrier

Capacity = 25%

Requires cleaning and disinfection if within arm's length of students

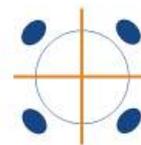


#### Option C

4 students, 2 barriers

Capacity = 50%

Requires cleaning and disinfection if within arm's length of students. Edges must extend beyond tables to prevent face-to-face contact and sharp edges must have rubber coating to prevent risk of injury



Assumed 1.5' seat width

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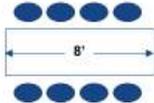
## Cafeteria seating diagrams – 8' rectangular tables

All cafeteria seating should come with extra enforcement of rules and monitoring for symptoms

● Student seating

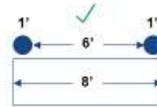
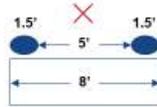
### 8' rectangular tables

Normal capacity: 8 people



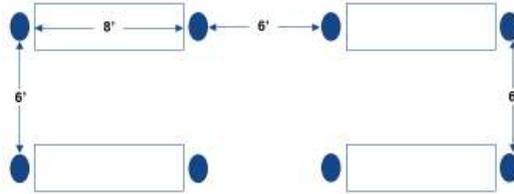
Assumed 1.5' seat width

**Option A 1' seating space:** 8' tables will not be able to accommodate 2 students seated in the same direction unless assumed seat width is reduced to 1' (instead of 1.5')



Capacity = 25%

**Option B Distanced face-to-face seating (no barriers):** To fit more students on a table, it may be for students to sit face-to-face 8' apart, while maintaining 6' of distance in other directions



Capacity = 25%

**Additional considerations:**  
Students will be directly facing one another and must refrain from shouting, singing, sneezing, or coughing

May require chairs if benches are not built on short ends

18

## Cafeteria seating diagrams – 8' rectangular tables

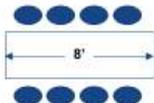
All cafeteria seating should come with extra enforcement of rules and monitoring for symptoms

● Student seating

— Plexiglass barrier

### 8' rectangular tables

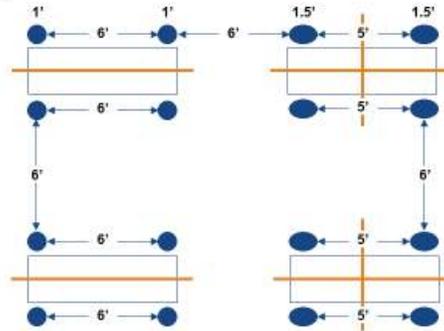
Normal capacity: 8 people



Assumed 1.5' seat width

**Option C Barriers:** Adding a horizontal barrier allows students to sit face-to-face on opposite sides of the table. If students require more than 1' of seating space, consider adding a vertical barrier that extends beyond the table and includes necessary rubber coating to prevent risk of injury. Barriers will require cleaning and disinfection between uses if within arm's length of students.

Capacity = 50%



**Additional considerations:**

Tables will require further spacing than Option B to meet 6 feet distance requirements

19

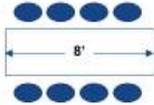
## Cafeteria seating diagrams – 8' rectangular tables

All cafeteria seating should come with extra enforcement of rules and monitoring for symptoms

● Student seating  
— Plexiglass barrier

### 8' rectangular tables

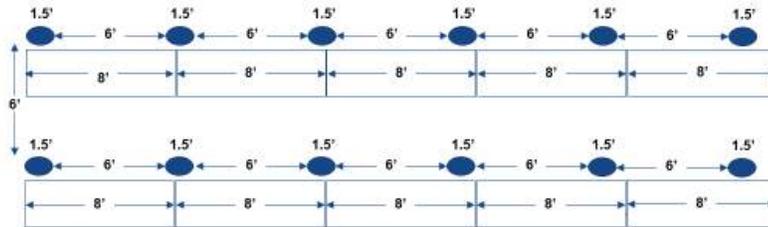
Normal capacity: 8 people



Assumed 1.5' seat width

**Option D Combine Tables:** Depending on the cafeteria layout, consider placing 8' next to each other to allow distanced seating to occur with adequate individual space.

Capacity = 19%



20

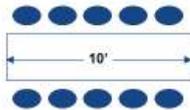
## Cafeteria seating diagrams – 10' and 12' rectangular tables

All cafeteria seating should come with extra enforcement of rules and monitoring for symptoms

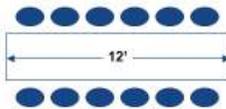
● Student seating

### 10' and 12' rectangular tables

Normal capacity: 10 people

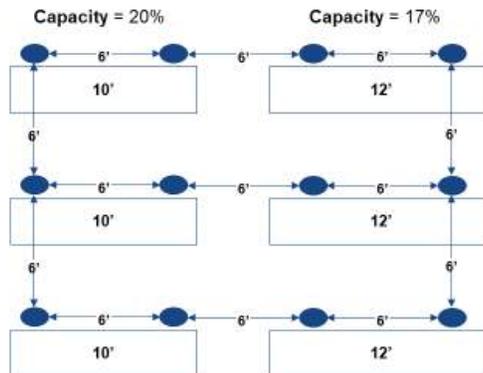


Normal capacity: 12 people



Assumed 1.5' seat width

**Option A No Barrier:** Without barriers, two students may be seated at a time



**Table spacing:** Ensure that 6 feet distance is still maintained between students sitting at other tables

**Student seating:** Both 10' and 12' cafeteria tables may seat 2 students maximum spaced 6 feet apart. All students should sit on the same side of the table and face the same direction

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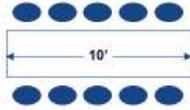
## Cafeteria seating diagrams – 10' and 12' rectangular tables

All cafeteria seating should come with extra enforcement of rules and monitoring for symptoms

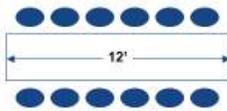
● Student seating  
— Plexiglass barrier

### 10' and 12' rectangular tables

Normal capacity: 10 people

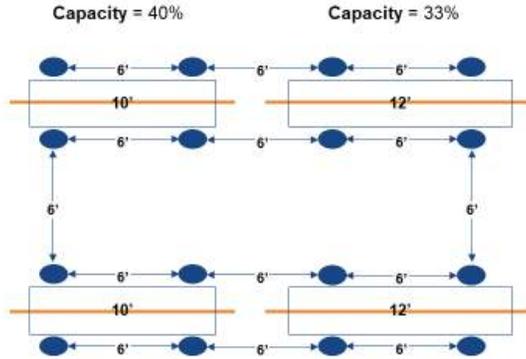


Normal capacity: 12 people



Assumed 1.5' seat width

**Option B Horizontal Barrier:** Adding a horizontal barrier allows students to sit face-to-face on opposite sides of the table. Barriers will require cleaning and disinfection between uses if within arm's length of students.



**Student seating:** Both 10' and 12' cafeteria tables may seat 2 students maximum spaced 6 feet apart

**Table spacing:** Ensure that 6 feet distance is still maintained between students sitting at other tables

**Additional considerations:**  
Tables will require further spacing than Option A to meet 6 feet distance requirements

22

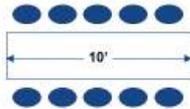
## Cafeteria seating diagrams – 10' and 12' rectangular tables

All cafeteria seating should come with extra enforcement of rules and monitoring for symptoms

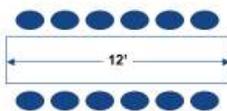
● Student seating  
— Plexiglass barrier

### 10' and 12' rectangular tables

Normal capacity: 10 people

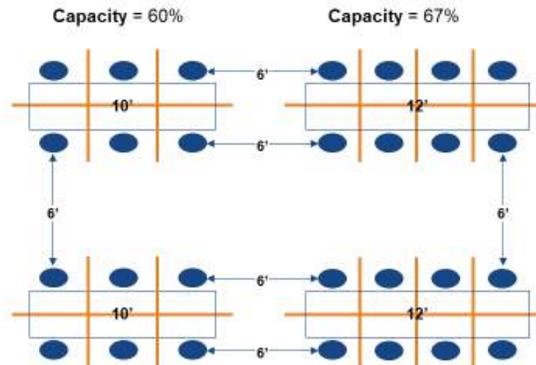


Normal capacity: 12 people



Assumed 1.5' seat width

**Option C Horizontal & Vertical Barriers:** Adding vertical barriers that extends beyond the table and includes necessary rubber coating to prevent risk of injury will further increase table capacity. Barriers will require cleaning and disinfection between uses if within arm's length of students.



**Student seating:** Both 10' and 12' cafeteria tables may seat 2 students maximum spaced 6 feet apart

**Table spacing:** Ensure that 6 feet distance is still maintained between students sitting at other tables

**Additional considerations:**  
Tables will require further spacing than Option A to meet 6 feet distance requirements

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- <sup>1</sup> HSPH. (2020). Schools for Health: Risk Reductions Strategies for Reopening Schools. Available at <https://schools.forhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/06/Harvard-Healthy-Buildings-Program-Schools-For-Health-Reopening-Covid19-June2020.pdf>
- <sup>2</sup> <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/reopening-schools-covid-19-brief>
- <sup>3</sup> CDC. (2020). Considerations for Schools. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>
- <sup>4</sup> HSPH. (2020). Schools for Health: Risk Reductions Strategies for Reopening Schools. Available at <https://schools.forhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/06/Harvard-Healthy-Buildings-Program-Schools-For-Health-Reopening-Covid19-June2020.pdf>
- <sup>5</sup> HSPH. (2020). Schools for Health: Risk Reductions Strategies for Reopening Schools. Available at <https://schools.forhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/06/Harvard-Healthy-Buildings-Program-Schools-For-Health-Reopening-Covid19-June2020.pdf>
- <sup>6</sup> CDC. (2020). Hand Hygiene Recommendations. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/hand-hygiene.html>
- <sup>7</sup> Kratzel, A., Todt, D., V'kovski, P., Steiner, S., Gultom, M., Thao, T. T. N., ... & Dijkman, R. (2020). Inactivation of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 by WHO-recommended hand rub formulations and alcohols. *Emerg Infect Dis*, 26. Available at [https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/26/7/20-0915\\_article](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/26/7/20-0915_article)
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- <sup>9</sup> HSPH. (2020). Schools for Health: Risk Reductions Strategies for Reopening Schools. Available at <https://schools.forhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/06/Harvard-Healthy-Buildings-Program-Schools-For-Health-Reopening-Covid19-June2020.pdf>
- <sup>10</sup> Massachusetts Commonwealth. (2020). Workplace COVID-19 Re-occupancy Guide. Available at <https://files.constantcontact.com/d0791a30801/89460c55-52ba-4610-980e-00b268a613fa.pdf>
- <sup>11</sup> Kimmitt, P.T. and Redway, K. R. (2016). Evaluation of the potential for virus dispersal during hand drying: a comparison of three method. *Journal of Applied Microbiology*, 2016/1655. Available at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26618932/>;
- <sup>12</sup> Best, E., Pamell, P., Couturier, J., Barbut, F., Le Bozec, A., Arnoldo, L., Madia, A., Brusaferrero, S., and Wilcox, M.H. (2018). Environmental contamination of bacteria in hospital washrooms according to hand-drying method: a multi-centre study. *Journal of Hospital Infection*, 2018,100. Available at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30006281/>;
- <sup>13</sup> Best, E. L. and Redway, K. (2014). Comparison of different hand-drying methods: the potential for airborne microbe dispersal and contamination. *Journal of Hospital Infection* 2015/89. Available at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25586988/>
- <sup>14</sup> CDC. (2020). Considerations for Schools. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>
- <sup>15</sup> CDC (2020). How to clean and disinfect. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
- <sup>16</sup> Melnick, H., & Darling-Hammond, L. (with Leung, M., Yun, C., Schachner, A., Plasencia, S., & Ondrasek, N.). (2020). Reopening schools in the context of COVID-19: Health and safety guidelines from other countries (policy brief). Available at <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/reopening-schools-covid-19-brief>
- <sup>17</sup> CDC. (2020). Considerations for Schools. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>
- <sup>18</sup> Melnick, H., & Darling-Hammond, L. (with Leung, M., Yun, C., Schachner, A., Plasencia, S., & Ondrasek, N.). (2020). Reopening schools in the context of COVID-19: Health and safety guidelines from other countries (policy brief). Available at <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/reopening-schools-covid-19-brief>
- <sup>19</sup> Ren, S., Wang, W., Hao, Y., Zhang, H., Wang, Z., Chen, Y., Gao, Rong. (2020). Stability and infectivity of coronaviruses in inanimate environments. Available at <https://www.wjnet.com/2307-8960/full/v8/i8/1391.htm>
- <sup>20</sup> CDC. (2020). Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools.html>
- <sup>21</sup> HSPH. (2020). Schools for Health: Risk Reductions Strategies for Reopening Schools. Available at <https://schools.forhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/06/Harvard-Healthy-Buildings-Program-Schools-For-Health-Reopening-Covid19-June2020.pdf>
- <sup>22</sup> HSPH. (2020). Schools for Health: Risk Reductions Strategies for Reopening Schools. Available at <https://schools.forhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/06/Harvard-Healthy-Buildings-Program-Schools-For-Health-Reopening-Covid19-June2020.pdf>
- <sup>23</sup> HSPH. (2020). Schools for Health: Risk Reductions Strategies for Reopening Schools. Available at <https://schools.forhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/06/Harvard-Healthy-Buildings-Program-Schools-For-Health-Reopening-Covid19-June2020.pdf>
- <sup>24</sup> HSPH. (2020). Schools for Health: Risk Reductions Strategies for Reopening Schools. Available at <https://schools.forhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/06/Harvard-Healthy-Buildings-Program-Schools-For-Health-Reopening-Covid19-June2020.pdf>

# Fall Reopening Transportation Guidance

July 22, 2020

## Introduction and overview of guidance

This transportation guidance supplements [DESE's Initial Fall School Reopening Memo](#). The initial memo put forth the goal of the safe return of as many students as possible to in-person school settings – *as in-person school is the best way to ensure student learning and continued social and emotional growth*. The safe transportation of students to and from school is a critical part of achieving this goal. In developing this supplemental transportation guidance, the health and safety of students and transportation staff remain our top priorities.

This guidance focuses on supporting districts to develop a transportation strategy that provides safe conditions for all students and staff traveling by bus, while also maximizing in-person learning:

1. **Follow the medically-advised health and safety requirements** for school bus transportation summarized below and further described starting on page 7.
2. **Address bus capacity challenges** created by the physical distancing requirements on the school bus by considering strategies such as adding bus routes, staggering schedules, and pursuing a waiver for student learning time requirements (on page 4) if needed.
3. **Take proactive steps to promote safe alternative transportation options** for students, including family-provided transportation, walking, and biking, as appropriate.

The Department developed this guidance through collaboration with infectious disease physicians, pediatricians, and public health experts from Massachusetts General Brigham Health System and the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. We also consulted with the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center's [Medical Advisory Board](#), comprised of physicians and other health experts, which carefully reviewed the health and safety requirements for bus transportation outlined in this document.

Please note that this guidance is being issued on July 22, 2020 and is subject to change depending on the COVID-19 trends and as we learn more about the virus from medical research. Schools and districts are encouraged to contact DESE if they would like to discuss individual considerations related to this transportation guidance. Districts should reach out to:

- **Russell Johnston**: Senior Associate Commissioner, [Russell.Johnston@mass.gov](mailto:Russell.Johnston@mass.gov), 781-605-4958
- **Erin McMahon**: Fall Reopening Implementation Lead, [Erin.K.Mcmahon@mass.gov](mailto:Erin.K.Mcmahon@mass.gov), 781-873-9023.

## Core health and safety practices

Several core practices will support safe school bus operations this fall:

- **Masks**  
All staff and students on the bus, regardless of age, are required to wear masks at all

times. Exemptions for students due to medical and/or behavioral reasons – and associated protocols – are further described later in this guidance.

- Distance**  
 Students should be seated *no more than* one student per bench, alternating sides for each row, which allows students to maintain approximately 3 feet of physical distance. Children from the same household may sit together and in closer proximity (e.g., two students per bench). Diagrams are provided later in this guidance.
- Ventilation**  
 Keep windows open at all times during operation, unless not possible due to extreme weather conditions.
- Seat assignments**  
 Students should be assigned to a single bus and a particular seat.
- Bus monitors**  
 Districts should consider adding a bus monitor (e.g., volunteer, student leader, or staff member) for every bus to ensure strict adherence to these health and safety guidelines.

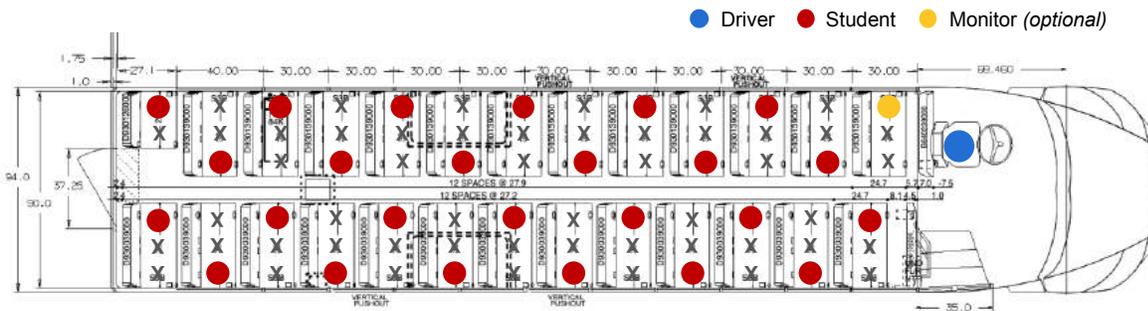
### Bus seating configuration

In alignment with the Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance, the following bus configuration (i.e., one student per bench, alternating sides for each row) represents the **maximum\*** school bus occupancy achievable while maintaining approximately 3 feet of physical distance.

**\*Note:** Children from the same household may sit together and are excluded from the one student per bench requirement.

**In the following sections of this guidance document, we will provide strategies for districts to consider in order to meet the challenge of these limits on bus capacity.**

The diagram below represents a 77-passenger bus. Configurations for other school bus models are shown in Appendix A. Districts should leave the bench immediately behind the driver’s seat vacant to maintain physical distance for the driver. Districts may consider repurposing this bench for a bus monitor, health and safety supplies, or other needs.



The table below estimates the revised maximum capacity of school buses under the configuration above (not including bus monitors or scenarios with multiple children from the same household). In the following section, we outline strategies for implementing this transportation guidance.

<b>Bus model</b>	<b>Maximum occupancy (excluding students who could sit together from same household)</b>	<b>Percentage of full bus capacity</b>
83-passenger bus	27 passengers	33%
77-passenger bus	25 passengers	32%
71-passenger bus	23 passengers	32%
47-passenger bus	15 passengers	32%
29-passenger bus	9 passengers	31%
26-passenger bus	8 passengers	31%
22-passenger bus	7 passengers	32%
14-passenger bus	6 passengers	43%

## Transportation planning and surveys

### Developing transportation plans

Each district should develop a **transportation plan** that follows the protocols outlined in this guidance. Districts should gather input from contracted transportation providers to develop these plans. Drivers and other transportation staff (e.g., bus monitors, if applicable) must be trained on the transportation plan prior to school reopening.

The plan should address the following key areas:

- **Surveying expected ridership** for the coming school year.
- Strategies for **encouraging alternative modes of transportation**.
- **Addressing bus capacity challenges through modifications to bus routes and schedules**, including potentially staggering school start and end times for greater bus capacity to enable more students to attend full-time, in-person school.
- **Modifications to boarding, pick-up, and drop-off protocols**, including a plan for defining bus and seat assignments.
- **Health and safety protocols**, including but not limited to screening, masks, physical distancing, hand hygiene, ventilation, and precautions for bus drivers and monitors.
- Schedules and protocols for **routine cleaning/disinfecting** of vehicles.
- Strategies, protocols, and training specific to **transportation of students with disabilities**, including those who require close contact with adults.
- **Communications and training** for parents/caregivers, students, and staff.

## Surveying families to understand school bus demand

We advise districts to develop a family survey that includes questions on expected bus ridership, if not already conducted. Districts should consider administering the survey more than one time prior to the start of the school year. The survey should proactively encourage parents and caregivers to pursue alternative transportation options when possible.

Districts should consider collecting the following information via surveys:

- How many students will return to school in the fall in-person?
- How many families/students are planning to use alternative transportation?
- What offerings/incentives might persuade families to use alternative transportation?
- What modes of alternative transportation will families/students be likely to use (e.g., walking, biking, driving, carpooling)?
- How many households will have two or more students riding the same bus (to allow more than one student per bench)?
- Might any students/parents/caregivers be willing to serve as bus monitors?

## Effectively addressing bus capacity challenges

Districts should look for ways to address capacity challenges by adding routes to existing bus runs, staggering start and end times for students, and encouraging families to seek alternative transportation to school when possible.

### 1. Increase transportation capacity

#### *Strategies to explore*

- **Add additional routes to existing bus schedules to increase capacity**, e.g. add a second or third morning route for a given neighborhood with an earlier or later pick up time than existing routes. This strategy will enable districts to increase capacity in a financially feasible manner, without having to add additional buses.
- **This may require districts to stagger school day start and end times** by cohort within schools and/or across the district to accommodate additional routes.
  - **Waiver request option: If districts require flexibilities with student learning time requirements to enable more students to attend school in-person**, they should contact Russell Johnston ([russell.johnston@mass.gov](mailto:russell.johnston@mass.gov)) or Erin McMahon ([erin.k.mcmahon@mass.gov](mailto:erin.k.mcmahon@mass.gov)) to request a waiver from student learning time requirements. More information on waiver requests will be forthcoming.
- Further **optimizing bus routes** and increasing **number of buses** available, if feasible.

#### *Key considerations*

- Coordinate decisions with transportation departments and contracted transportation providers. Decisions will depend on budget constraints, the ability to shift school and/or transportation schedules, and bus/driver availability.
- Modify and augment school bus pick-up and drop-off procedures to minimize crowding.

## 2. Increase the number of parents/caregivers who safely transport their students

### *Strategies to explore*

- Encouraging parents/caregivers to **transport their children**
- Encouraging/facilitating **carpooling within fixed cohorts**

### *Key considerations*

- Consider creating or expanding before- and after-school programs to align with parent work schedules to make it easier for families to transport their children.
- Modify and augment pick-up and drop-off procedures to account for increased driver traffic to minimize crowding.
- Inform parents and students about appropriate health and safety guidelines, including the need to wear a mask if transporting students from multiple households and the need to maintain physical distance as is feasible.
- Consider incentives for families to encourage transporting their students.

## 3. Increase the number of students who safely walk or bike to school

### *Strategies to explore*

- **“Walking school bus” programs** for younger age groups (i.e., groups of children walking to school with adult supervision).<sup>1</sup>
  - Districts/schools can facilitate this directly or encourage parents/caregivers to organize themselves as volunteers, while adhering to appropriate health and safety guidelines.
- Promoting walking/biking through **walk-to-school** or **bike-to-school campaigns**.
- **Partnering with bike share companies** to offer discounts or offer bike subsidies.

### *Key considerations*

- Encourage “walking school bus” programs within consistent student groups or cohorts and/or household members.
- Inform participating parents and students about appropriate health and safety guidelines, including the need to wear a mask at all times and the need to maintain maximum physical distance.
- Engage local police departments when appropriate to help with safety protocols across extended walk zones.<sup>2</sup>
- Prepare for changing transportation patterns (e.g., more crossing guards, bike racks)<sup>3</sup> and work with local authorities as needed.

## Other implementation considerations

### Seat assignments and boarding

Assigning specific buses, routes, and seats to students and staff in advance will limit potential exposure and make contact tracing easier to conduct.<sup>4</sup> In addition, to prevent crowding and minimize interaction, students and transportation staff should follow the protocols outlined below when entering or exiting the vehicle.

- **Keep bus staffing assignments as static as possible** by assigning drivers and other transportation staff to a single bus and a specific route.
- **Assign students to a single bus and to an assigned seat.** Children from the same household should be assigned seats together. Seating arrangements should also account for students with disabilities who require close contact from adults.
- **As students board the bus, occupy seats starting from the rear of the bus and fill sequentially to the front.** Upon arrival at school, the bus should be unloaded in a controlled manner, starting from the front of the bus and emptying sequentially to the back.
- **Assign seats with the above boarding order and process in mind** (i.e., based on *when* students will board during the route). For example, students boarding the bus at the beginning of the route should be assigned seats at the *rear* of the of the bus, and students boarding the bus at the end of the route should be assigned seats at the front.

### Pick-up and drop-off protocols

Modify arrival and departure protocols to limit crowding upon student drop-off and pick-up. District and school leaders should establish policies for student entry and dismissal including a plan for traffic, drop-off, and pick-up that complies with physical distancing guidelines.

- **Consider having one bus of students enter the building at a time.** When weather allows, students who are not entering right away should wait outside, preferably with members of their cohort, in designated areas that are clearly marked for physical distancing.
- **Consider how to schedule students who will walk or bike to school or will be dropped off by car** to limit crowding and support physical distancing.
- **Prepare to respond to changing transportation patterns** (e.g., more crossing guards, bike racks/storage)<sup>5</sup> and work with local authorities as needed.
- **Consider utilizing multiple entry/exit points and pick-up/drop-off locations** (e.g., assign students/grade levels to different entrances at arrival and departure times).
- **Modify protocols for parent/caregiver pick-up and drop-off**
  - Designate appropriate pick-up area(s) for parents/caregivers.
  - Parents/caregivers should remain in their vehicle while waiting for their child.
  - Parents/caregivers should maintain physical distancing standards and wear masks if they exit their vehicle.
- **High schools should consider designating extra parking spots or street spaces for student parking** if surveys show that more students will be using personal vehicles.

### Considerations for students with disabilities

Some students with disabilities require specialized transportation as part of their Individualized Education Program (IEP). To reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, districts should work collaboratively with parents of students who are eligible for specialized transportation to determine their ability to transport their child(ren) to and from school.

- **Parents of students for whom special transportation is provided for in their IEPs and who transport their student are eligible for reimbursement**, according to [603 CMR 28.07\(6\)](#). In these cases, the student maintains the right to access transportation for a disability-related need at a future date. The IEP should not be amended to reflect the temporary change in transportation arrangements, but the family should be notified in writing of this temporary change if they agree to transport their student.
- In cases where special transportation is provided for in the student’s IEP and the family is unable to transport their student, **school districts must coordinate and provide transportation for those students, including students in out-of-district placements.**

## Public transportation

Districts should work with their regional transportation authorities if students take public transportation to or from school. Districts should provide health and safety guidelines to students using public transit systems including<sup>6</sup>:

- **Limit touching frequently touched surfaces** such as kiosks, touchscreens, ticket machines, turnstiles, handrails, restroom surfaces, elevator buttons, and benches as much as possible.
- **Wear a mask at all times during transportation.**
- **Follow physical distancing guidelines** by maximizing space between riders as feasible.
- **Practice hand hygiene** (e.g., use hand sanitizer after leaving the transit station or bus stop).
- **When possible, travel during non-peak hours** when there are likely to be fewer people. If you expect a significant number of students within your district to take public transportation, consider adjusting start/end times to avoid rush-hour transit.
- **Check with local transit authorities for the latest information** on changes to services and procedures, especially if additional assistance is required.

## Transportation health and safety requirements and related guidance

The health and safety of students and staff are our top priorities as we prepare for in-person learning this fall. This section outlines school transportation health and safety requirements developed in collaboration with infectious disease physicians, pediatricians and public health experts from the Massachusetts General Brigham Health System and the Massachusetts chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Our process included a thorough review of guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO), as well as available medical literature on COVID-19 related to children and school settings. Finally, the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center [Medical Advisory Board](#), made up of physicians and other health experts, has carefully reviewed the transportation health and safety requirements outlined below. Please refer to the Initial Fall School Reopening Memo for a more extensive review of medical literature and evidence.

## Bus monitor

**To ensure adherence to health and safety guidelines, we encourage districts to consider adding a bus monitor to every bus.** This role could be a hired position, paraprofessional, current student, staff member, or volunteer, but should not be an individual at high risk for COVID-19. This bus monitor must also adhere to all health and safety guidelines outlined in this memo.

Bus monitor responsibilities may include:

- Asking whether students received **at-home pre-screening** (see “Symptoms screening” below).
- Managing vehicle **entry/exit processes** including directing students to assigned seating.
- Ensuring all **health and safety requirements are met** (e.g., physical distancing, masks, ventilation, hand sanitizer, safe storage of health and safety supplies, etc.).
- Coordinating **arrival/departure** and **entry/dismissal protocols**.
- Assisting with **routine cleaning** and **sanitization activities**, as appropriate.

## Symptom screening

Checking for symptoms each morning by families and caregivers, before students arrive at the bus stop, is critical and will serve as the primary screening mechanism for COVID-19 symptoms.<sup>7</sup>

- **Bus drivers or bus monitors (if applicable) should be appropriately trained to observe students upon entry.** If students appear symptomatic, and a parent/caregiver is present to take them home, they should not be permitted to enter the school bus. If a parent/caregiver is not present to take them home, bus monitors should refer students who may be symptomatic to the school healthcare point of contact immediately upon arrival.
- **If a student who may be symptomatic must board the vehicle, they should be spaced at least six feet from other students as feasible.** Close off areas used by the student, and do not use those areas again until after cleaning and disinfecting.<sup>8</sup>
- **Consider posting signs at bus entrances clearly indicating that no one may enter if they have symptoms of respiratory illness or fever.**
- **If children become sick during the day, they should not be permitted to travel home via school bus.**

## Masks

Everyone on the bus and waiting at bus stops must wear masks that cover the nose and mouth at all times.

- **Adults**, including drivers and other transportation staff (e.g., bus monitors), **are required to wear masks.**
- **Students are required to wear masks, regardless of age, when on the bus.**
- **Exceptions to masks for students:** Face shields may be an option for students with medical, behavioral, or other challenges who are unable to wear masks. Please see the

“physical distancing” section below for protocols on how to work with families of students who cannot wear masks due to medical, behavioral, or other challenges.

- **Masks should be provided by the student/family**, but districts must ensure that sufficient extra disposable masks are made available on all buses for any student who needs them.

## Physical distancing

As reviewed and advised by the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center Medical Advisory Group, students must maintain a minimum distance of 3 feet from others, unless they are members of the same household.<sup>9</sup> For transportation, this means one student per bench, alternating sides for each row.

The following distancing standards must be implemented in conjunction with strict adherence to health and safety requirements:

- Distancing requirements apply both while **waiting at bus stops and while in transit**.
- **Children from the same household should be seated together** and may be seated two or more students per bench (closer than 3 feet).
- **As may be appropriate, consider marking off ground at bus stops** where students can wait at 6 feet of physical distance from one another (if not wearing masks).
- **Students should face forward at all times** and refrain from eating, shouting, singing, or sharing items while in transit.
- **Determine and post maximum occupancy for each bus** while following these distancing guidelines.
- **Students who are not able to wear a mask while riding the bus** should maintain 6 feet of distance between themselves and other students. If possible, the student should wear a face shield while on the bus. Districts should work with the families of students who are regularly unable to wear a mask regarding possible alternative transportation arrangements (i.e. walking to school or the family transporting the student).

## Hand sanitizing

Install hand sanitizer dispensers on buses for students and drivers to clean hands as they board and exit. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropanol content can be used.<sup>10</sup> Hand sanitizer should be applied to all surfaces of the hands in sufficient quantity that it takes 20 seconds of rubbing hands together for the sanitizer to dry.

- **Hand sanitizer dispensers should be placed only at the entrance of school buses within view of the bus driver or monitor** to ensure appropriate use. Students and staff are required to exercise hand hygiene (handwashing or sanitizing) upon arrival to school.
- **During winter months, students wearing gloves upon entry should be encouraged to keep gloves on at all times** during transit to the extent possible. If the student wishes to remove the gloves, they should follow the hand sanitizing protocols outlined above upon entry and exit.

## Ventilation

Mitigate airborne transmission by increasing outdoor air ventilation. Doing so helps dilute the concentration or displace the presence of an airborne virus. Opening windows can greatly increase the level of ventilation within a school bus and therefore reduce COVID-19 transmission risk.<sup>11</sup>

- **Keep windows open at all times during operation**, unless not possible due to extreme weather conditions. Even in cold or rainy weather, bus windows should be kept open at least partially (a couple of inches), if possible.
- **Consider keeping roof hatches open** on buses during operation for further ventilation.<sup>12</sup>

## Cleaning and disinfecting

Coordinate with the district transportation department and contracted transportation providers to ensure vehicles are properly cleaned and disinfected. *At a minimum, high-touch surfaces (see examples below) must be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly after each morning route and after each afternoon route using EPA-approved disinfectants.*<sup>13,14</sup> The interior of each vehicle must be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly at least once each day.

- **Clean high-touch surfaces first and most frequently**, including buttons, handholds, pull cords, window latches, rails, steering wheels, door handles, shift knobs, dashboard controls, and stanchions.<sup>15</sup>
- **Conduct thorough routine cleaning of vehicles**, including dusting and wet-mopping vehicle floors, removing trash, wiping heat and air conditioner vents, spot cleaning walls and seats, dusting horizontal surfaces, cleaning spills, etc.<sup>16</sup>
- **Routine cleaning outlined above should be completed prior to disinfection** to remove all surface matter.
- **Doors and windows should remain open when cleaning the vehicle.**<sup>17</sup>
- **Staff should be trained to use disinfectants in a safe and effective manner** and to clean up potentially infectious materials and body fluid spills. All sanitizing and disinfecting solutions must be labeled properly to identify the contents and kept out of the reach of students.
- **Drivers and monitors should have adequate supplies** of soap, paper towels, tissues, hand sanitizer, garbage bags, and other critical cleaning supplies.

## Precautions for transportation staff

Bus drivers and monitors face potential exposure through close contact with passengers, contact with high-touch surfaces, or by touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.<sup>18</sup> Older individuals and those with serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19. To mitigate these risks, all bus drivers and monitors should take the following precautions when transporting students:<sup>19</sup>

- **Avoid touching surfaces** often touched by passengers.
- **Wear masks** covering the nose and mouth at all times.

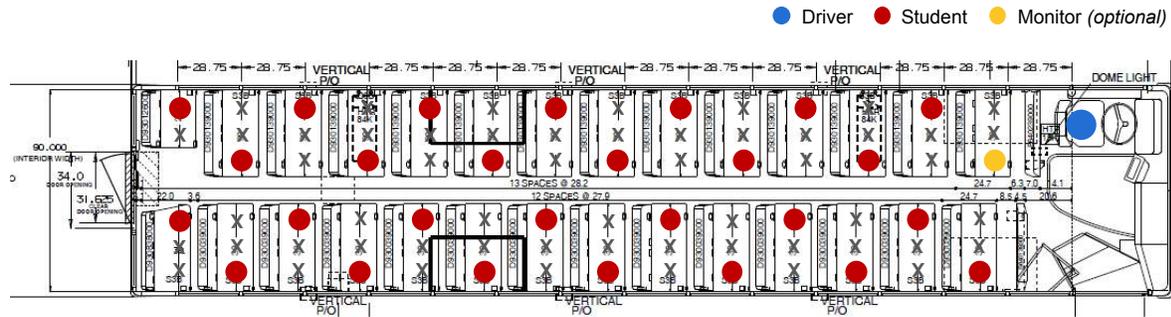
- **Use gloves if required to touch surfaces contaminated by bodily fluids.**
- **Maintain proper hand hygiene.** Wash hands regularly with soap and water when available for at least 20 seconds and use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Don't report for duty if sick.**

## Appendix A: Bus seating configurations and capacity estimates

**Bus Model: 83-passenger bus**

**Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements: 27 passengers (33% full capacity)**

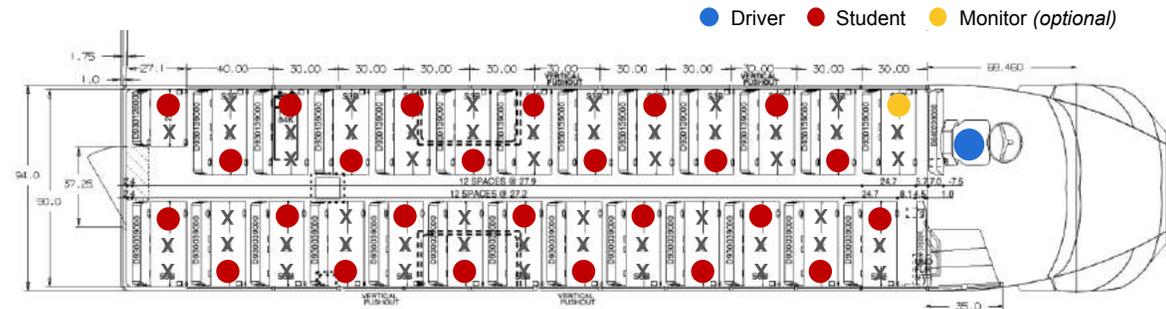
**Seat map configuration:**



**Bus Model: 77-passenger bus**

**Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements: 25 passengers (32% full capacity)**

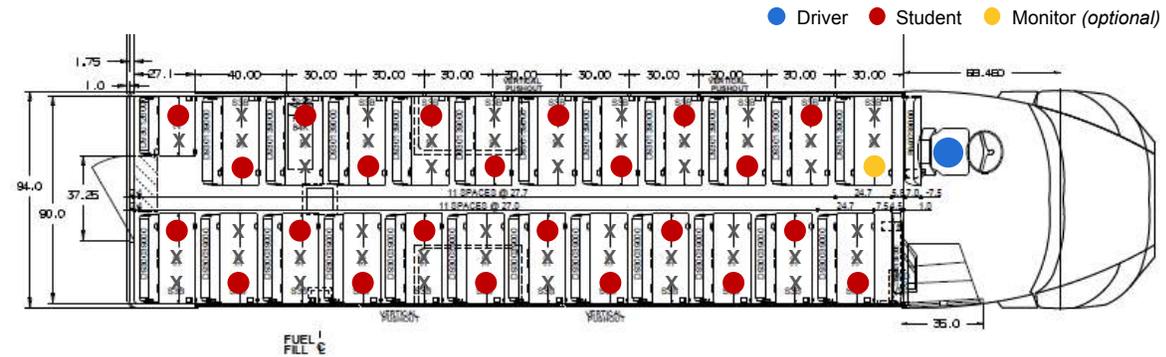
**Seat map configuration:**



**Bus Model: 71-passenger bus**

**Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements: 23 passengers (32% full capacity)**

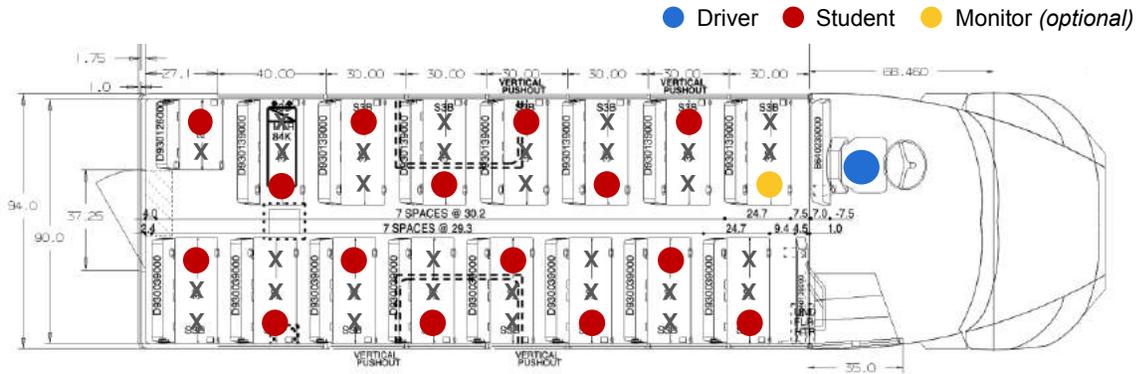
**Seat map configuration:**



**Bus Model: 47-passenger bus**

**Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements: 15 passengers (32% full capacity)**

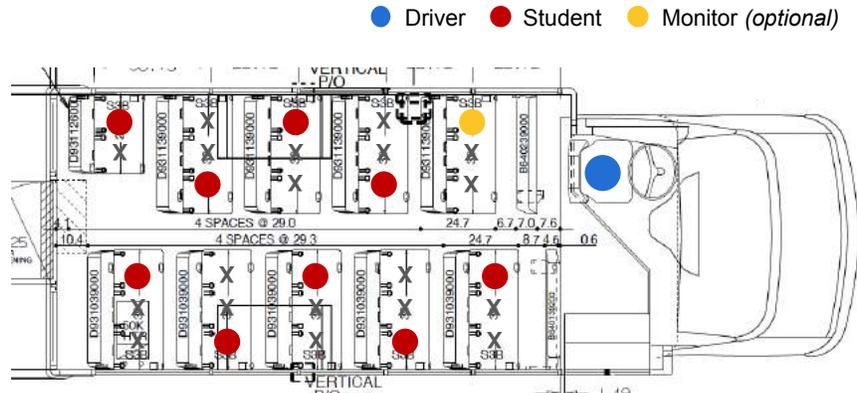
**Seat map configuration:**



**Bus Model: 29-passenger bus**

**Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements: 9 passengers (31% full capacity)**

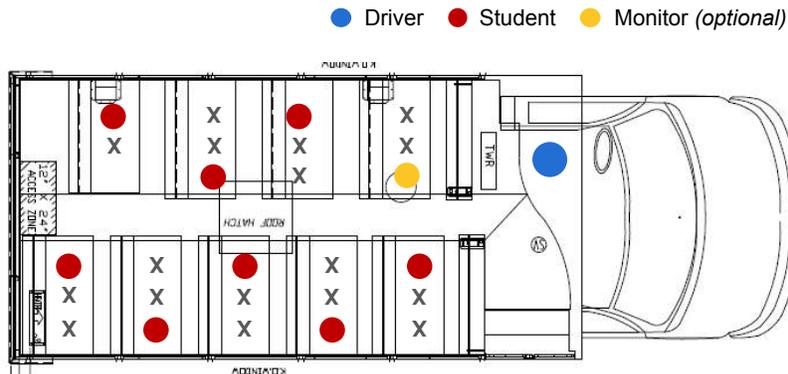
**Seat map configuration:**



**Bus Model: 26-passenger bus**

**Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements: 8 passengers (31% full capacity)**

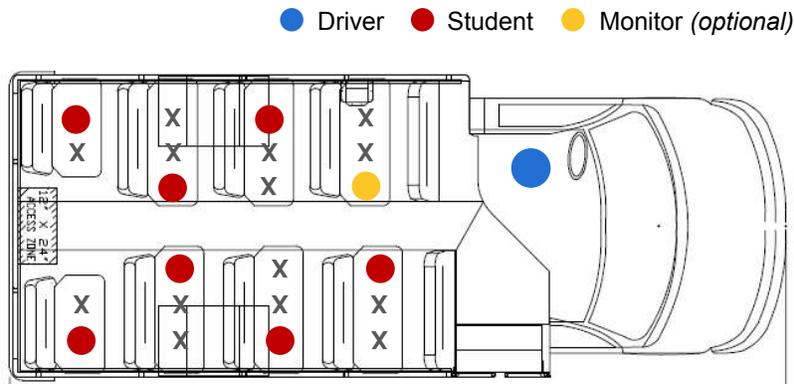
**Seat map configuration:**



**Bus Model:** 22-passenger bus

**Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements:** 7 passengers (32% full capacity)

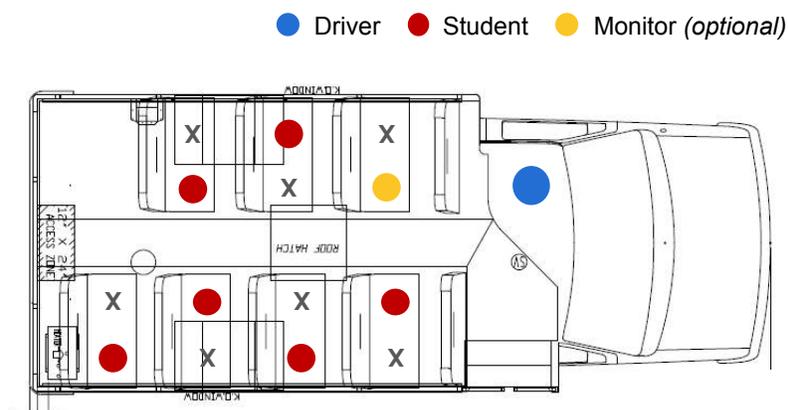
**Seat map configuration:**



**Bus Model:** 14-passenger bus

**Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements:** 6 passengers (43% full capacity)

**Seat map configuration:**



<sup>1</sup> Safe Routes Partnership, COVID-19 Resource Center. Available at: <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/safe-routes-school/covid19>

<sup>2</sup> Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, Schools for Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools. (2020, June). Available at: <https://schools.forhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/06/Harvard-Healthy-Buildings-Program-Schools-For-Health-Reopening-Covid19-June2020.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Education Week, Managing Buses May Be the Hardest Part of Reopening Schools. (2020, June 10). Available at: <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/06/11/managing-buses-may-be-the-hardest-part.html>

<sup>5</sup> Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, Schools for Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools. (2020, June). Available at: <https://schools.forhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/06/Harvard-Healthy-Buildings-Program-Schools-For-Health-Reopening-Covid19-June2020.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> CDC, Protect Yourself When Using Transportation. (2020, May 26). Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/using-transportation.html#PublicTransit>

<sup>7</sup> CDC, Considerations for Schools. (2020, May 19). Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> WHO, Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19. (2020, May 10). Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/considerations-for-school-related-public-health-measures-in-the-context-of-covid-19>

<sup>10</sup> CDC, Hand Hygiene Recommendations, (2020, May 17). Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/hand-hygiene.html>

<sup>11</sup> Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, Schools for Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools. (2020, June). Available at: <https://schools.forhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/06/Harvard-Healthy-Buildings-Program-Schools-For-Health-Reopening-Covid19-June2020.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.schoolbusfleet.com/10119440/7-bus-safety-practices-districts-are-planning-for-school-start>

<sup>13</sup> EPA, List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19). (2020, June 17). Available at: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>

<sup>14</sup> CDC, Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-emergency Transport Vehicles. (2020, April 14). Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> American Federation of Teachers, COVID-19 Resources for School Bus Personnel: Best Cleaning and Disinfecting Practices for Buses. (2020, March 23). Available at:

[https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/covid19\\_info\\_buscleaning.pdf](https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/covid19_info_buscleaning.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> CDC, Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-emergency Transport Vehicles. (2020, April 14). Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html>

<sup>18</sup> CDC, What Bus Transit Operators Need to Know About COVID-19. (2020, April 14). Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/bus-transit-operator.html>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

# Guidance for Courses Requiring Additional Safety Considerations for Fall 2020

July 24, 2020

## Introduction

As a supplement to DESE's [Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance](#) (*download*), we are providing districts and schools with guidance for the following in-school classes which require additional safety considerations this fall:

- **Arts: Chorus, band, theater, dance, and visual arts**
- **Physical education**

This document also provides guidance on shared equipment for these and other courses, including materials for art classes, computers, and, for younger students, toys like building blocks.

**This guidance is being released in late July 2020 and may be revised as we continue to monitor COVID-19 trends and the latest medical research.**

We will issue additional guidance on vocational/technical classes, extracurricular activities, school performances, competitions, and large gatherings.

**Please note: Detailed guidance on youth sports will likely be issued in early August.** A taskforce with representatives from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA), the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), and infectious disease physicians and other public health experts, is working to identify guidelines for youth sports and how youth sports can be played safely this fall. Currently, MIAA has approved September 14, 2020 as the start date for any fall sports that will be allowed to play under the forthcoming state guidelines.

## Importance of the arts and physical education

The arts, physical education, and other enrichment courses are an integral part of the learning experience for every student at every grade level. We strongly encourage schools and districts to continue providing these classes to students this fall.

**Adaptations to these courses, however, are necessary to support the safety of students and staff.** Even though these activities require additional logistics, we are confident that they can and should continue this fall, as outlined in the following pages.

In this document, we focus on guidance for courses that require enhanced health and safety measures due to increased respiration or sharing of equipment, and we include guidance specific to each type of course. These guidelines are designed to reduce the risk of virus transmission.

## Core health and safety practices

In our Initial Fall Reopening Guidance, we put forth the goal of the **safe** return of as many students as possible to in-person school. **This requires us to establish a new culture of health and safety in our schools this fall. It is not one mitigation strategy, but a combination of several strategies that will substantially reduce the risk of transmission.**

The core health and safety strategies are summarized below. For more detailed information, please see other DESE guidance, including the [Initial Fall Reopening Guidance](#) (*download*) and [Facilities and Operations Guidance](#) (*download*).

- **Stay at home if not well.** All students and staff should stay home if they are not feeling well, have any COVID-19 symptoms, or are in a household with someone who has recently tested positive COVID-19.
- **Masks are among the most important measures to contain the spread of COVID-19.** We require all staff and students second grade and above to wear masks, and younger students are strongly recommended to wear masks.
- **Physical distance greatly reduces the risk of transmission.** In general, 6 feet is the recommended distance between individuals where feasible. The minimum distance required is 3 feet, which is medically permitted when wearing masks.
- **Hand hygiene is critical.** We require frequent handwashing or hand sanitizing.
- **Create cohorts and assign seats.** As feasible, cohorts of the same students taking part in the same activity should be created. Smaller cohorts are preferred when feasible.
- **Maximize ventilation.** For the courses and activities outlined in this guidance, ventilation, including holding classes outdoors, can be an important consideration.

## General guidance for courses requiring additional safety considerations

### Courses that require enhanced health and safety measures

Chorus, singing, brass or woodwind instrument use, physical education activities, dance, and theater require enhanced health and safety measures, because they may involve increased respiration.<sup>1</sup> Research into optimal ways to maximize safety in these types of activities is ongoing. As a result, in consultation with our medical advisors, our guidance at this time is intentionally conservative and recommends modifications to minimize these elevated risks.

**We strongly encourage these courses and activities be held fully or partially online if possible. If they are held in person, we strongly encourage – and at times require – these activities to occur outdoors.** Safety requirements for these activities are as follows:

#### **For chorus, singing, musical theater, and using brass or woodwind instruments:**

- **If outdoors, with masks encouraged if possible,** these activities can occur with at least 10 feet of distance between individuals.
- **Note: At this time, these activities are not permitted indoors.**

### **For non-musical theater:**

- **If outdoors, with masks encouraged if possible**, these activities can occur with 6 feet of distance between individuals.
- **If indoors, with masks required**, these activities can occur with 6 feet of distance between individuals.
- **Note: These activities cannot occur indoors without a mask.**

### **For physical education activities and dance:**

- **If outdoors, without masks**, these activities can occur with 10 feet of distance between individuals.
- **If outdoors, with masks required**, these activities can occur with 6 feet of distance between individuals.
- **If indoors, with masks required**, these activities can occur with 6 feet of distance between individuals.
- **Note: These activities cannot occur indoors without a mask.**

### **Courses that involve regular sharing of equipment**

Many courses and activities use equipment and materials that are regularly shared between students, including music, visual arts, and physical education. The sharing of equipment and materials (e.g., building blocks, computers) is permitted with the following modifications.

#### **Require students to wash hands, wear masks, and maintain distance**

- Students should wash or sanitize hands before and after using equipment;<sup>2</sup> frequent handwashing is likely the best way to protect against transmission from surfaces.
- Ideally, students must be 6 feet apart. When wearing masks, 3 feet is the minimum distance allowed between students (seat edge to seat edge). Masks must cover the nose and mouth and be on at all times if students are less than 6 feet apart or using shared equipment.

#### **Minimize and modify shared equipment usage**

- **Consider lesson plans that minimize the use of shared equipment.**<sup>3</sup> If feasible, reduce class sizes for classes requiring equipment to reduce the need for equipment sharing.
- **If feasible, procure additional pieces of equipment in order to limit sharing.** This may not be possible for more expensive equipment (e.g., cameras) but may be possible for other types (e.g., some art supplies).
- **Assign specific students to specific pieces of equipment or workstations** (e.g., computers, art stations) that they can use for each class session. This is similar to having assigned seats in classrooms so that specific students are always near the same other students.

- **If there is not enough equipment for each student to have their own, consider creating cohorts, e.g., having students work in pairs or small groups** and keeping those groups the same.
  - One student can physically touch the equipment (e.g., camera) and the other students can play roles that do not involve physically touching the equipment (e.g., arranging items to be photographed).
  - If it is possible for the students to wipe down/clean the equipment part of the way through class, students can switch roles. Otherwise, students can swap roles in the next class session.
- **Equipment that touches the eyes or mouth (e.g., cameras) can be shared if a disposable protective cover is added** and students do not directly breathe into the item (for example, woodwind instruments cannot be shared). Disposable protective covers should be removed, disposed of and replaced with a new cover between uses, and the equipment should be cleaned between uses by students or custodial staff.
- **Instruments that do not come into contact with the mouth (e.g., piano) can be shared** if cleaned by students or custodial staff between uses. Woodwind or brass instruments (e.g., flute, saxophone, trumpet, clarinet) cannot be shared.
- **Do not share equipment or objects that are hard to clean and disinfect** (e.g., any materials with fabric or irregular surfaces such as stuffed animals or playdough).<sup>4</sup>

### **Increase shared equipment cleaning**

- **Shared equipment should be wiped down before and after each use** (so there are ideally two wipe-downs between each student's use). Students or custodial staff could wipe down/clean equipment as appropriate.
  - An [EPA approved disinfectant](#) should be made available in each room for this purpose. Sufficient inventory of disinfectant supplies should be maintained at all times.
  - Teachers play an important role in proper equipment hygiene. In the classes in which students wipe down/clean their own equipment, teachers should demonstrate how to properly wipe down/clean equipment, reinforce the importance of this practice, and supervise cleaning to ensure it is done correctly.
  - Post signage in all areas with shared equipment reminding students to wipe it down/clean it before and after use.
- **Additionally, shared equipment should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily** as part of building cleaning schedules. Frequently touched surfaces (e.g., handles, buttons) should be cleaned multiple times a day.<sup>5 6</sup>

## Specific guidance by type of course

### Chorus and singing instruction

Singing carries a relatively higher risk of virus transmission because voice projection generates respiratory droplets.<sup>7</sup> Chorus and singing must use the guidance for courses that require enhanced health and safety measures on page 2.

- Consider what mask types may be most comfortable for singing and whether these masks can be provided to students.<sup>8</sup>
- When outdoors, staff should monitor student volume to prevent harm to students' vocal cords.
- Consider pursuing musical pieces that are at a lower volume. The lower the volume, the less projection required. Consider, also, the volume of any background music. The higher the volume of background music, the more vocalists will need to project to be heard.
- All students should face in one direction instead of facing one another. Avoid singing in a circle or semicircular formation.
- Students and teachers should avoid sharing materials (e.g., music stands) when feasible. Any sharing of equipment should follow the equipment sharing guidelines on page 3.
- When it is not possible to continue with singing instruction based on the guidelines on page 2 – for instance, when activities cannot be held outdoors due to inclement weather or in colder seasons – courses could focus on other aspects of music instruction, such as history of music, music theory, or vocal anatomy. These courses could also be conducted virtually.<sup>9</sup>

### Theater

Singing and voice projection, both common in theater, carry a relatively higher risk of virus transmission.<sup>10</sup> Musical and non-musical theater courses and activities must use the above guidelines for courses that require enhanced health and safety measures on page 2.

- Intentionally select artistic works that may facilitate reduced in-person interaction, such as those that involve smaller casts or that are easily rehearsed outdoors.<sup>11</sup> As one example, Concord Theatricals has created a [list of such works](#).<sup>12</sup>
- Avoid sharing equipment as feasible. Any sharing of equipment, including props, set pieces, rails, and voice amplification equipment, should follow the equipment sharing guidelines on page 3. Do not share makeup or anything that comes into close contact with mouth or eyes (e.g., microphones). Avoid sharing costumes and wigs.<sup>13</sup>
- Any rental equipment should be thoroughly disinfected upon receipt and before returning and regularly cleaned and disinfected, as with other equipment.

## Band and the use of musical instruments

As is the case for chorus and singing, some musical instruments carry a relatively higher risk of virus transmission. Instruction for brass and woodwind instruments must follow the guidelines for courses that require enhanced health and safety measures on page 2.

- As noted earlier, instruction for musical instruments that require air blowing (e.g., flute, oboe, clarinet, trumpet, saxophone, trombone) can only occur outdoors when individuals are at least 10 feet apart. These instruments should never be shared.
- Instruction for musical instruments that do not involve air blowing (e.g., strings, percussion, piano) may continue indoors or outdoors as long as health and safety requirements are met. If needed, these instruments can be shared between students in accordance with the above guidance on shared equipment on page 3.
- Students should be encouraged to clean their instruments regularly, especially the mouthpiece and high-touch surfaces, such as finger pads.
- For cleaning guidelines specific to each instrument, the National Federation of State High School Associations, the National Association for Music Education, and the National Association of Music Merchants Foundation have published [COVID-19 Instrument Cleaning Guidelines](#).

## Dance

While dance does not typically involve vocalization, it is a physically intense activity, similar to physical education, and can result in an increased risk of transmission due to increased respiration. Dance courses and activities must use the guidelines for courses that require enhanced health and safety measures on page 2. In addition:

- Prioritize forms of dance that allow for adequate distancing;<sup>14</sup> dances reliant on close-proximity partners must be adapted to maintain physical distancing requirements.
- All sharing of equipment should follow the shared equipment guidance on page 3.
- Keep music at a volume that minimizes the need for the instructor to project their voice.

## Physical education

This section contains guidance for physical education classes during the school day. With physical activity, individuals tend to breathe more heavily and speak louder, which increases the potential for dispersal of respiratory droplets. Physical education classes should follow the guidance for courses that require enhanced health and safety measures on page 2 and equipment sharing on page 3 and follow these guidelines:

- No physical education classes can have activities with close physical contact.
- Physical education should prioritize activities that do not require shared equipment. For example, consider agility training exercises, bodyweight strength training (such as push-ups), yoga, track and field, running, step aerobics, or racquet activities (as long as racquets are disinfected before and after use).
- Prioritize outdoor activities, whenever possible.

- Students should wash or sanitize hands before and after physical education. Particular attention should be paid to washing and sanitizing hands before and after masks are removed and put on, if applicable.
- No sharing of water bottles, towels, mouth guards, helmets or other equipment that comes into contact with the nose or mouth is allowed.
- If feasible, close communal areas, including athletic locker rooms. If not feasible, stagger locker assignments and access such that students who need to use lockers at the same time (e.g., those in the same physical education class) will be able to maintain physical distancing. Athletic locker rooms should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily.
- As part of the school cleaning/disinfecting protocols, frequently clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces (e.g., any equipment used) between uses and at least daily.

## Visual arts

Visual arts courses and activities may involve the sharing of specialized equipment among students, such as paint brushes, paints, and cameras. Visual arts courses and activities must follow the guidance on equipment sharing on page 3.

Additional suggestions for visual arts courses and activities include:

- Pay particular attention to adding disposable protective covers to shared cameras and any other equipment that requires close eye or mouth contact.
- Adapt curricula when feasible to avoid expensive equipment (such as printers) that students need to share.
- Prioritize activities that require minimal supplies, such as sculpting clay, or create individual art kits with assigned supplies (e.g., colored pencils, markers) to use for the semester.
- Emphasize any elements of courses that could involve outdoor time such as drawing outdoors or nature photography.
- Change the focus of activities to avoid shared equipment use (e.g., switching a visual art class from screen printing to a focus on charcoal drawings where individual supplies can be used each class).
- Assign small student groups, e.g. create cohorts, at the beginning of the semester for visual arts courses which last for the entire semester. For example, consider assigning one student per camera to a photography assignment, with other students studying a famous photographer for one unit, and then switch these groups of students for the next unit.

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- <sup>1</sup> Harvard School of Public Health, [Schools For Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools](#). (2020, June).
  - <sup>2</sup> Harvard School of Public Health, [Schools For Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools](#). (2020, June).
  - <sup>3</sup> Harvard School of Public Health, [Schools For Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools](#). (2020, June).
  - <sup>4</sup> CDC, [Considerations for Schools](#). (2020, May 19).
  - <sup>5</sup> CDC, [Considerations for Schools](#). (2020, May 19).
  - <sup>6</sup> Harvard School of Public Health, [Schools For Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools](#). (2020, June).
  - <sup>7</sup> Harvard School of Public Health, [Schools For Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools](#). (2020, June).
  - <sup>8</sup> Consider masks such as those available here: <https://www.broadwayreliefproject.com/singersmask>
  - <sup>9</sup> Harvard School of Public Health, [Schools For Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools](#). (2020, June).
  - <sup>10</sup> Harvard School of Public Health, [Schools For Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools](#). (2020, June).
  - <sup>11</sup> Harvard School of Public Health, [Schools For Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools](#). (2020, June).
  - <sup>12</sup> Concord Theatricals, [Innovative and Flexible Show Selection for the 2020-21 School Year](#). (2020, June).
  - <sup>13</sup> Educational Theater Association, [Recommendations for Reopening School Theatre Programs](#). (2020, June).
  - <sup>14</sup> Dance USA, [Return to Dancing and Training Considerations Due to COVID-19](#). (2020).



*News from Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley & the  
MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education*

## **On the Desktop - June 10, 2020**

### **Additional Guidance on Fall Reopening Plans**

Dear Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, Leaders of Approved Special Education Schools, and Collaborative Leaders,

After continued discussions with the field, I am writing to provide you with additional guidance on fall reopening plans.

As noted in our initial fall guidance, I am requiring districts to submit one reopening plan that will address health and safety requirements and different student learning models — in-person, hybrid, and remote learning. The plan must also describe how special populations will be effectively served within each of the models. **This reopening plan is due to DESE by Friday, July 31, and we will provide a template next week.**

At this time, given the current low transmission rates of COVID-19 in the state, and pursuant to emergency regulations recently passed by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, we are asking districts and schools to prioritize in-person instruction. Specifically, we have asked districts to focus on assessing the feasibility of bringing back students in-person, and those feasibility studies should be taking place in your districts now.

While you continue working to flesh out these models, **I am requesting that you hold off on announcing any final decisions about what reopening will look like for the fall in your district until early August.** While preparations for the fall must move forward, we are still waiting for key information that will directly impact the best fit reopening model for each community. This includes more information about financial resources that may be available, including the possibility of a second federal stimulus package, and any change in local COVID-19 transmission rates.

I understand that local communities are eager for districts to finalize their reopening plans as soon as possible. At the same time, I am confident that our families and students will be better served by a thoughtful planning process that works first to explore options and takes in critical additional information before local plans are finalized.

To support your planning, we have attached our first installment of answers to frequently asked questions. We will continue to release FAQs with updates and covering additional topics as more details become available.

Thank you for all of your tireless work on behalf of our students.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Riley  
Commissioner



*News from Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley & the  
MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education*

## **On the Desktop - July 24, 2020**

### **Guidance on Courses Requiring Additional Safety Considerations and Remote Learning**

Dear Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, Assistant Superintendents, Collaborative Leaders, and Leaders of Approved Special Education Schools,

As a supplement to DESE's [Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance](#) (*download*), we are providing districts and schools with the attached remote learning guidance and the attached guidance for the following in-school classes that require additional safety considerations this fall:

- Arts: Chorus, band, theater, dance, and visual arts
- Physical education

**The arts, physical education, and other enrichment courses are an integral part of the learning experience for every student at every grade level, and we strongly encourage schools and districts to continue providing these classes to students this fall. Adaptations to these courses, however, are necessary to ensure the safety of students and staff.** Please note that this guidance may be revised as we continue to monitor COVID-19 trends and the latest medical research.

**The remote learning guidance provides additional detail on remote learning expectations, program models districts may consider, and considerations for implementing various models.**

The document includes:

- **Important information about policy requirements and related guidance for remote learning** this fall
- Criteria for meeting **foundational technology needs**, and
- Conditions and considerations for **selecting an appropriate remote learning option for your school or district.**

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Riley  
Commissioner



*News from Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley & the  
MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education*

## **On the Desktop - July 29, 2020**

### **Career/Vocational Technical Education Reopening Guidelines**

Dear Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, and Assistant Superintendents,

As the Commonwealth prepares for the fall reopening of schools, including resuming in-person instruction, we are issuing the attached guidance to support the safe reopening of vocational technical schools and comprehensive schools offering vocational technical programs. The guidance includes appropriate measures to promote the safety of students, teachers, and staff. This guidance may also be used as a reference for other related programs, such as Innovation Pathways and Connecting Activities.

The attached document also provides considerations on how to effectively apply state and federal guidance to CVTE programs, including **exploratory programs, cooperative education (co-ops), clinical placements, and internships.**

**In addition, this document provides further guidance for the initial months of operation for the following school-based programs, to promote the health and safety of students and staff:**

- Culinary Arts
- Early Education and Care
- Cosmetology
- Automotive Technology and Automotive Collision
- Graphic Communications and Marketing

This guidance may be revised as we continue to monitor COVID-19 trends and the latest medical research.

Thank you for all the planning you are doing for a safe return to learning.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Riley  
Commissioner



*News from Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley & the  
MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education*

## **On the Desktop - August 11, 2020**

### **Guidance for Districts and Schools on Interpreting DPH COVID-19 Metrics**

Dear Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, Assistant Superintendents, Approved Special Education Schools, and Collaboratives,

There has been much discussion about COVID-19 health and safety metrics that can be helpful guidelines for when schools re-open this school year. Such metrics should serve as a guide as to whether schools should open using full-time in-person, hybrid, or remote models, and will also support future decision-making if the impact of COVID-19 requires us to switch between educational models throughout the school year.

Each Wednesday, the Department of Public Health releases its [Weekly COVID-19 Public Health Report](#) that contains critical metrics for each municipality. Effective this week, there will also be a color-coded indication posted for each municipality calculated on a rolling two-week basis.

- **Red** will designate communities with more than 8 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents.
- **Yellow** will designate communities that have more than 4 and up to 8 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents.
- **Green** will designate communities that have 4 or fewer COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents.
- **Unshaded** will designate communities with small populations and fewer than 5 cases within the last 14 days.

Because the impact of the virus is local, the concept of this particular COVID-19 health/safety designation is focused on the municipal level.

Following the release of these updated metrics, we are providing districts and schools with initial guidance on how to interpret them for school settings. These guidelines were developed in consultation with our infectious disease physicians and other public health experts.

### **General guidance for interpreting these metrics**

While average daily cases per 100,000 over a two-week period is the metric that determines the color-coding for each community, districts and schools should also monitor whether cases are increasing or decreasing as compared to the prior period. The local test positivity rate also

remains an important metric to monitor. In consultation with local boards of health, districts should consider whether these additional metrics and underlying data may indicate other concerning trends.

Please note that districts should look at multiple consecutive weekly COVID-19 reports to assess trends in order to inform any changes to their learning model for the start of the school year or to make any changes during the year.

For regional schools and others that draw from multiple cities and towns, DESE will issue additional guidance that points to the appropriate data to view for your context.

### Guidance for using these metrics to determine local learning models

Based on these updated weekly COVID-19 metrics, DESE’s guidance for how these data should inform each school and district’s learning model is as follows:

New color-coded metric*		DESE expectation for learning model
<b>RED</b>	Average daily cases per 100,000 is <b>greater than 8</b>	<b>Remote</b>
<b>YELLOW</b>	Average daily cases per 100,000 is <b>between 4 - 8</b>	<b>Hybrid</b> <b>OR Remote</b> (if extenuating circumstances)
<b>GREEN</b>	Average daily cases per 100,000 is <b>less than 4</b>	<b>Full-time in-person</b> <b>OR Hybrid</b> (if extenuating circumstances)
<b>UNSHADED</b>	Fewer than 5 total cases over the past 14 days. Generally, this is for communities with small populations and very few cases.	

*\*Measured as a 14-day rolling average and will be reported weekly as part of the online DPH dashboard*

It is our expectation that districts’ learning models will follow this color-coded metric unless there are extenuating circumstances identified after consultation with local boards of health. This includes reviewing additional metrics, such as whether cases are increasing or decreasing, the local test positivity rate, and other contextual factors. Please see the attached slides.

We understand that local school committees and governing boards, working with district and school leaders, have recently finalized or are about to finalize initial fall reopening plans. We expect these updated metrics and related guidance will support your decision-making both for school reopening and throughout the year if we encounter changing circumstances.

While districts and schools may choose to make immediate adjustments to initial fall reopening plans based on this data, districts may also wait for multiple data reports and allow for further time for consultation before making these updates.

We acknowledge that you have much to consider as to how best to serve our students in ways that are safe for students, teachers, staff, families, and the community at large. It is our hope that this additional guidance can support you in these critical decisions.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Riley  
Commissioner

# Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

[MENU >](#)

## Preparing K-12 School Administrators for a Safe Return to School in Fall 2020

### Preparing for a Safe Return to School

Updated Aug. 1, 2020

[Print](#)

Schools are an important part of the infrastructure of communities and play a critical role in supporting the whole child, not just their academic achievement.

This guidance is intended to aid school administrators as they consider how to protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of students, teachers, other school staff, their families, and communities and prepare for educating students this fall.

This guidance is for K-12 school administrators who are preparing for students, teachers, and staff to return to school in fall 2020. School administrators are individuals who oversee the daily operations of K-12 schools, and may include school district superintendents, school principals, and assistant principals.

#### It is critical that all administrators:

- Engage and encourage everyone in the school and the community to practice preventive behaviors. These are the most important actions that will support schools' safe reopening and will help them stay open.
- Implement multiple SARS-CoV-2 mitigation strategies (e.g., social distancing, cloth face coverings, hand hygiene, and use of [cohorting](#)).
- **Communicate, educate, and reinforce** appropriate hygiene and social distancing practices in ways that are developmentally appropriate for students, teachers, and staff.
- Integrate SARS-CoV-2 mitigation strategies into co-curricular and extracurricular activities (e.g., limiting or cancelling participation in activities where social distancing is not feasible).
- Maintain healthy environments (e.g., cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces).
- Make decisions that take into account the level of community transmission.
- Repurpose unused or underutilized school (or community) spaces to increase classroom space and facilitate social distancing, including outside spaces, where feasible.
- Develop a proactive plan for when a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19.
- Develop a plan with state and local health department to conduct case tracing in the event of a positive case.
- Educate parents and caregivers on the importance of monitoring for and responding to the symptoms of COVID-19 at home.
- Develop ongoing channels of communication with state and local health departments to stay updated on COVID-19 transmission and response in your local area.

The guidance described in this document is based on the best available evidence at this time. This guidance is meant to supplement—not replace—any state, local, territorial, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations with which schools must comply.

#### Key considerations for school administrators

- COVID-19 transmission rates in the immediate community and in the communities in which students, teachers, and staff live

- Approaches to cohorting that fit the needs of your school/district and community (e.g., keeping students in class pods, staggering when students return to school facility, having the same teacher stay with the same group of students)
  - Can unused or underutilized school spaces, including outdoor spaces, be repurposed to increase classroom space and facilitate social distancing?
- Concurrently implementing multiple strategies in school to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (e.g., social distancing, cloth face coverings, hand hygiene, and use of cohorting)
- Best practices for your school and community to communicate, educate, and reinforce personal protective behaviors to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in school and in the community
- Integrating strategies to reduce COVID-19 transmission into co-curricular and extracurricular activities (e.g., limiting participation in activities where social distancing is not feasible)
- Planning and preparing for when someone gets sick
- Working with state and local health authorities to develop a plan to conduct contact tracing in the event of a positive case
- Communicating appropriately to families about home-based symptom screening

## Critical role of schools

This guidance is intended, first and foremost, to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of students, teachers, other school staff, their families, and communities.

Schools are an important part of the infrastructure of communities, as they provide safe, supportive learning environments for students, employ teachers and other staff, and enable parents, guardians, and caregivers to work. Schools also provide critical services that help to mitigate health disparities, such as school meal programs, and social, physical, behavioral, and mental health services. School closure disrupts the delivery of these critical services to children and families, and places additional economic and psychological stress on families, which can increase the risk for family conflict and violence. <sup>[1], [2]</sup>

The unique and critical role that schools play makes them a priority for opening and remaining open, enabling students to receive both academic instruction and support as well as critical services. In order to prioritize opening schools safely and helping them to remain open, communities should consider adopting actions to mitigate community transmission. CDC's [Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission](#) has strategies for community mitigation to reduce or prevent the spread of COVID-19, which in turn will help schools to open and stay open safely. Recognizing the importance of providing safe, in-person learning, communities may also wish to help schools by examining whether additional public or private space, including outdoor spaces, that is currently underutilized might be safely repurposed for school and instructional purposes.

Returning to school in fall 2020 poses new challenges for schools, including implementing mitigation measures (e.g., social distancing, cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, use of cloth face coverings), addressing social, emotional, and mental health needs of students, addressing potential learning loss, and preparing for the probability of COVID-19 cases within the broader school community.

This guidance provides information about:

- What is currently known about COVID-19 among school-aged children
- The importance of going back to school safely
- What is currently known about SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) transmission in schools and its impact on community transmission
- The ways administrators for kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) schools can plan and prepare for in-person instruction and minimize the impact of potential closures

## What is known about the signs and symptoms, burden, and transmission of SARS-CoV-2 among children?

### Signs and symptoms

Common COVID-19 symptoms [among children](#) include fever, headache, sore throat, cough, fatigue, nausea/vomiting, and diarrhea. <sup>[3]</sup> However, many children and adults infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 are asymptomatic (meaning they have no signs or symptoms of illness).

## Impact of COVID-19 on children

Collecting and sharing data, including how it affects different places and populations, is important for understanding the context and burden of the COVID-19 pandemic. School officials should make decisions about school reopening based on available data including levels of community transmission and their capacity to implement appropriate mitigation measures in schools. Children appear to be at lower risk for contracting COVID-19 compared to adults. While some children have been sick with COVID-19, adults make up nearly 95% of reported COVID-19 cases. <sup>[4]</sup> Early reports suggest children are less likely to get COVID-19 than adults, and when they do get COVID-19, they generally have a less serious illness. <sup>[5]</sup> As of July 21, 2020, 6.6% of reported COVID-19 cases and less than 0.1% of COVID-19-related deaths are among children and adolescents less than 18 years of age in the United States. <sup>[6]</sup>

Early reports suggest the number of COVID-19 cases among children may vary by age and other factors. Adolescents aged 10-17 may be more likely to become infected with SARS-CoV-2 than children younger than age 10, <sup>[7], [8]</sup> but adolescents do not appear to be at higher risk of developing severe illness. <sup>[9]</sup> There are currently a higher proportion of COVID-19 cases among Hispanic/Latino children as compared to non-Hispanic white children. Children and adults with certain [underlying medical conditions](#) are at [increased risk of severe illness](#) from COVID-19. <sup>[10]</sup> Severe illness means that they may require hospitalization, intensive care, or a ventilator to help them breathe, or may even die. Children with intellectual and developmental disabilities are more likely to have [comorbid medical conditions](#) (e.g., diseases of the respiratory system; endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases; and diseases of the circulatory system) that may put them at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. <sup>[11]</sup> Although rare, some children have developed multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C) after exposure to SARS-CoV-2. As of May 20, 2020, the majority of children hospitalized with MIS-C had recovered. <sup>[12]</sup>

Data on SARS-CoV-2 transmission among children are limited. Evidence from other countries suggests that the majority of children with COVID-19 were infected by a family member. <sup>[13]</sup> For example, the first pediatric patients in South Korea and Vietnam were most likely from contact with an adult family member. <sup>[14], [15]</sup> Published reports from contact tracing of students with COVID-19 in schools from France, Australia, and Ireland suggest that students are not as likely to transmit the virus to other students compared to household contacts. <sup>[16], [17], [18]</sup> However, more research is needed on SARS-CoV-2 transmission between children and household members.

## What is known about how schools have reopened and the impact on SARS-CoV-2 transmission?

Internationally, schools have responded to COVID-19 using a variety of approaches. <sup>[19], [20]</sup> For example, China, Denmark, Norway, Singapore, and Taiwan all required temperature checks at school entry. <sup>[21]</sup> Most countries have changed the way they operate to reduce class sizes, increase physical distance between students, and keeping students in defined groups to reduce contacts (i.e., [cohorting](#)). <sup>[22]</sup> Furthermore, many countries have staggered attendance, start and stop times, and created alternating shifts to enable social distancing. In some places this means that only certain students have returned to schools, either by grade range or need. For example, Denmark was the first European country to reopen schools. Denmark staggered students' reentry in waves (e.g., one group started school first, followed by another group at a later date), with limited class sizes and using other social distancing measures. <sup>[23]</sup> Younger students (under age 12) returned first based on their lower health risk and need for more supervision than older students. Class sizes were reduced to allow physical distancing. In Taiwan, students returned to school with mandatory temperature checks and use of face masks. Rather than national school closures, Taiwan relied on local decision-making to determine if classroom or school closures were needed, based on infection rates. <sup>[24]</sup>

There is mixed evidence about whether returning to school results in increased transmission or outbreaks. For example, Denmark initially reported a slight increase in cases in the community after reopening schools and child care centers for students aged 2-12 years, followed by steady declines in cases among children between ages 1 and 19 years. <sup>[25]</sup> In contrast, Israel experienced a surge of new cases and outbreaks in schools after reopening and relaxing social distancing measures; it is unclear what caused the increase in cases and what other mitigation measures the schools had implemented. <sup>[26]</sup> In summer 2020, Texas reported more than 1,300 COVID-19 cases in childcare centers; however, twice as many staff members had been diagnosed as children, suggesting that children may be at lower risk of getting COVID-19 than adults. <sup>[27]</sup>

It is important to consider community transmission risk as schools reopen. Evidence from schools internationally suggests that school re-openings are safe in communities with [low SARS-CoV-2 transmission](#) rates. <sup>[28]</sup> Computer simulations from Europe have suggested that school re-openings may further increase transmission risk in communities where transmission is already high. <sup>[29]</sup> More research and evaluation is needed on the implementation of mitigation strategies (e.g., social distancing, cloth face coverings, hand hygiene, and use of [cohorting](#)) used in schools to determine which strategies are the most effective. Such research would improve understanding of the impact of mitigation strategies on the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission in schools, and ongoing monitoring and surveillance of transmission in schools could help with timely outbreak detection and prevent wider spread.

## Why is it important to open schools for in-person instruction?

While opening schools – like opening any building or facility—does pose a risk for the spread of COVID-19, there are many reasons why opening schools in the fall of 2020 for in-person instruction is important.

### Schools play a critical role in the wellbeing of communities

Schools are a fundamental part of the infrastructure of communities. Schools provide safe and supportive environments, structure, and routines for children, as well as other needed support services to children and families. Schools play a vital role in the economic health of communities by employing teachers and other staff and helping parents, guardians, and caregivers work.

### Schools provide critical instruction and academic support

Schools provide critical instruction and academic support that benefit students and communities in both the short- and long-term. The main role and priorities of K-12 educational institutions are to provide age-appropriate instruction and support students' academic development. Reopening schools will provide in-person instruction for students, facilitate increased communication between teachers and students, and provide students with critical academic services, including school-based tutoring, special education, and other specialized learning supports.

Studies show that students have experienced learning loss during the period of school closure and summer months. <sup>[30]</sup> In-person instruction for students has advantages over virtual learning, particularly when virtual learning was not the planned format for instruction, and schools may not have the resources or capability to transition fully to virtual learning. In-person classroom instruction has the added benefit for many students of interpersonal interaction between the student and the teacher and the student and peers. <sup>[31]</sup> Teachers are able to more actively participate in student learning, provide feedback as students encounter challenges, and promote active learning among students. <sup>[32]</sup>

In-person instruction may be particularly beneficial for students with additional learning needs. Children with disabilities may not have access through virtual means to the specialized instruction, related services or additional supports required by their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 Plans. <sup>[33]</sup> Students may also not have access through virtual means to quality English Language Learning (ELL). <sup>[34]</sup>

When schools are closed to in-person instruction, disparities in educational outcomes could become wider, as some families may not have capacity to fully participate in distance learning (e.g., computer and internet access issues, lack of parent, guardian, or caregiver support because of work schedules) and may rely on school-based services that support their child's academic success. The persistent achievement gaps that already existed prior to COVID-19 closures, such as disparities across income levels and racial and ethnic groups, could worsen and cause long-term effects on children's educational outcomes, health, and the economic wellbeing of families and communities. <sup>[35], [35]</sup> While concern over higher rates of COVID-19 among certain racial/ethnic groups may amplify consideration of closing a school that educates primarily racial minority students, there should also be consideration that these may also be the schools most heavily relied upon for students to receive other services and support, like nutrition and support services.

## Schools play a critical role in supporting the whole child, not just the academic achievement of students

### Social and emotional health of students can be enhanced through schools

Social interaction among children in grades K-12 is important not only for emotional wellbeing, but also for children's language, communication, social, and interpersonal skills. <sup>[37]</sup> Some students may have experienced social isolation and increased anxiety while not physically being in school due to COVID-19. Resuming in-person instruction can support students' social and emotional wellbeing. <sup>[38]</sup> Schools can provide a foundation for socialization among children. When children are out of school, they may be separated from their social network and peer-to-peer social support. Schools can facilitate the social and emotional health of children through curricular lessons that develop students' skills to recognize and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, appreciate others' perspectives, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. <sup>[39]</sup>

## Mental health of students can be fostered through school supports and services

Schools are an important venue for students to receive [emotional and psychological support](#) from friends, teachers, and other staff members. Lengthy school building closures can leave some students feeling isolated from important friendships and support from other caring adults. <sup>[40]</sup> Schools also provide critical psychological, mental and behavioral health (e.g., psychological counselling, mental and behavioral assessment) services to children who may not have access to these services outside of school. School closures have limited the availability of these services. Furthermore, isolation and uncertainty about the COVID-19 pandemic can create feelings of [hopelessness and anxiety](#) while removing important sources of social support. Some students may have experienced trauma through the loss of a loved one from COVID-19. Increases in anxiety and depression may occur when students do not have the structure and routine that being in school brings to their daily lives. Finally, having opportunities to be physically active through recess and physical education can help improve students' feelings of anxiety and sadness. These physical activities should be provided regularly to students in a safe and supportive environment that includes physical distancing and strategies to reduce close contact between students.

## Continuity of other special services is important for student success

Students who rely on key services, such as school food programs, special education and related services (e.g., speech and social work services, occupational therapy), and after school programs are put at greater risk for poor health and educational outcomes when school buildings are closed and they are unable to access such school health programs and services. <sup>[41]</sup> During periods of school building closures, students had limited access to many of these critical services, potentially widening educational and health disparities and inequities.

# How can K-12 schools prepare for going back to in-person instruction?

## Expect cases of COVID-19 in communities

International experiences have demonstrated that even when a school carefully coordinates, plans, and prepares, cases may still occur within the community and schools. Expecting and planning for the occurrence of cases of COVID-19 in communities can help everyone be prepared for when a case or multiple cases are identified.

## Coordinate, plan, and prepare

Administrators should coordinate with local public health officials to stay informed about the status of COVID-19 transmission in their community. Additionally, planning and preparing are essential steps administrators can take to safely reopen schools:

- CDC's [Considerations for Schools](#) provides detailed recommendations for schools to plan and prepare to reduce the spread of COVID-19, establish healthy environments and maintain healthy operations. This guidance includes information about implementation of mitigation strategies, such as physical distancing within buses, classrooms and other areas of the school, healthy hygiene habits, cleaning and disinfection, use of cloth face coverings, staggering student schedules, and planning for staff and teacher absences (e.g., back-up staffing plans).
- One important strategy that administrators can consider is [cohorting](#) (or "pods"), where a group of students (and sometimes teachers) stay together throughout the school day to minimize exposure for students, teachers, and staff across the school environment. At the elementary school level, it may be easier to keep the same class together for most of the school day. In middle and high school settings, cohorting of students and teachers may be more challenging. However, strategies such as creating block schedules or keeping students separated by grade can help to keep smaller groups of students together and limit mixing. Strategies that keep smaller groups of students together can also help limit the impact of COVID-19 cases when they do occur in a school. If a student, teacher, or staff member tests positive

for SARS-CoV-2, those in the same cohort/group should also be tested and remain at home until receiving a negative test result or [quarantine](#). This helps prevent a disruption to the rest of the school and community by limiting the exposure. Schools should have systems in place to support continuity or learning for students who need to stay home for either isolation or quarantine. This includes access to online learning, school meals, and other services. The same holds for students with additional needs, including children with a disability, that makes it difficult to adhere to mitigation strategies.

[Operating Schools During COVID-19](#): Guiding principles and mitigation strategies to use when school is open

## Prepare for potential COVID-19 cases and increased school community transmission

Schools should be prepared for COVID-19 cases and exposure to occur in their facilities. Collaborating with [local health officials](#) will continue to be important once students are back to school, as they can provide regular updates about the status of COVID-19 in the community and help support and maintain the health and wellbeing of students, teachers, and staff. Having a plan in place for maintaining academic instruction and ensuring students have access to special services is also critical.

## Making decisions about school operations

Administrators should make decisions in collaboration with local health officials based on a number of factors, including the [level of community transmission](#), whether cases are identified among students, teachers, or staff, what other indicators local public health officials are using to assess the status of COVID-19, and whether student, teacher, and staff cohorts are being implemented within the school.

### What is the level of community transmission?

There are specific strategies schools can implement based on the [level of community transmission](#) reported by local health officials:

- If there is *no to minimal community transmission*, reinforcing everyday preventive actions, ensuring [proper ventilation](#) within school facilities, including buses, and maintaining cleaning and disinfection practices remain important. These actions can help minimize potential exposure. Schools should also monitor absenteeism among teachers, staff, and students to identify trends and determine if absences are due to COVID-19, symptoms that led to quarantine, concerns about being in the school environment and personal health and safety, or positive test results. Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 should [stay home and self-isolate](#) for the timeframe recommended by public health officials. Anyone who has had [close contact](#) with someone who has tested positive or is symptomatic for COVID-19 should be tested and stay home until receiving a negative result, or [stay home and monitor for symptoms](#).
- If there is *minimal to moderate community transmission*, schools should follow the actions listed above, and continue implementing mitigation strategies such as [social distancing](#), use of [cloth faced coverings](#), reinforcing everyday preventive actions, and maintaining cleaning and disinfection. This also can include ensuring that student and staff groupings/cohorts are as static as possible and that mixing groups of students and staff is limited.
- If there is *substantial, controlled* transmission, significant mitigation strategies are necessary. These include following all the actions listed above and also ensuring that student and staff groupings/cohorts are as static as possible with limited mixing of student and staff groups, field trips and large gatherings and events are canceled, and communal spaces (e.g., cafeterias, media centers) are closed.
- If there is *substantial, uncontrolled* transmission, schools should work closely with local health officials to make decisions on whether to maintain school operations. The health, safety, and wellbeing of students, teachers, staff and their families is the most important consideration in determining whether school closure is a necessary step. Communities can support schools staying open by implementing strategies that decrease a community's level of transmission. However, if community transmission levels cannot be decreased, school closure is an important consideration. Plans for virtual learning should be in place in the event of a school closure.

### Did a student or staff member test positive for SARS-CoV-2?

If someone within the school community (e.g., student, teacher, staff) tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, assessing the level of risk is important to determine if, when, and for how long part or all of a school should be closed. K-12 administrators can also refer to CDC's [Interim Considerations for K-12 for School Administrators for SARS-CoV-2 Testing](#), which provides additional

Refer to CDC's [interim considerations for K-12 for school administrators for SARS-CoV-2 testing](#), which provides additional information about [viral diagnostic testing](#). A single case of COVID-19 in a school would not likely warrant closing the entire school, especially if levels of community transmission are not high. The levels of community transmission described above and the extent of [close contacts](#) of the individual who tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 should all be considered before closing. These variables should also be considered when determining how long a school, or part of the school, stays closed. If the transmission of the virus within a school is higher than that of the community, or if the school is the source of an outbreak, administrators should work collaboratively with local health officials to determine if temporary school closure is necessary. Students, teachers, and staff who test positive or had close contact of the individual who tested positive should be provided with guidance for when it is safe to [discontinue self-isolation](#) or end [quarantine](#).

- **What other indicators are local public health officials using to assess the status of COVID-19?** Local health officials can help inform decisions related to school operations by examining public health [indicators](#)  that are used to determine level of community transmission and disease severity levels. For example, indicators such as healthcare capacity (e.g., staffing, ICU bed occupancy), changes in newly identified COVID-19 cases, and percentage of people testing positive for SARS-CoV-2 infections in the community might be useful to determine whether to maintain or modify school operations. These indicators are set by state, local, tribal, and territorial health and healthcare officials, and should be shared with schools for decision making.
- **Is a cohort approach used within the school?** The level of student and staff mixing within the school should also be considered. If students are kept in cohorts to minimize mixing of students, exposure to an individual with COVID-19 may be limited to one particular cohort and not pose a broad risk to the rest of the school. Cohorts that have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 can switch to virtual learning and stay home in accordance with CDC's guidelines for [quarantine](#) and [self-isolation](#), and the school may remain open.

## Communicate with families, staff, and other partners

When preparing to go back to school, regular communication should be used to update students, families, teachers, and staff about academic standards, meal program services, and access to other school-based essential services that students and families rely on.

Regular communication with families, staff, and other partners should include:

- Updates about the status of COVID-19 in the school and community
- Notification when there are COVID-19 cases in the school (when communicating about the health status of students, schools should take care to avoid disclosing personally identifiable information and should follow all applicable privacy requirements, including those of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)
- Explanation of what parents, students, teachers, and staff can expect when returning to school; in particular, communicating about:
  - The importance of staying home when sick and [staying home to monitor symptoms if close contact occurred with a person who tested positive for SARS-CoV-2](#)
  - Considerations for COVID-19 symptom screenings
  - Types of social distancing measures being implemented
  - When students, teachers, staff and/or visitors will be expected to wear cloth face coverings and whether cloth face coverings will be available from the school.
  - Everyday [healthy hygiene practices](#) that will be implemented upon reopening (e.g., students, teachers, staff staying home when sick, hand hygiene, cleaning frequently touched surfaces)
- Actions being taken to prevent SARS-Cov-2 transmission in buses, school buildings and facilities
- [Actions that families and households can take to help prevent the spread](#) of COVID-19
- Actions families can take to [manage anxiety about COVID-19](#)
- Decisions about operational status, potential use of virtual learning if COVID-19 cases are identified among students, teachers, or staff, and
- Guidance on [caring for someone who is sick](#) and for [parents, guardians, and caregivers who are sick](#)
- Guidance on how to [reduce stigma](#). Fear and anxiety about a disease can lead to social stigma, which is negative attitudes and beliefs toward people, places, or things

Families and students who had to make alternative arrangements with community providers to receive services (e.g., physical or occupational therapy, speech therapy, mental health services) during periods of school closures may need additional support and communication to establish a transition plan upon returning to school. Additionally, some families may have experienced significant hardship that now increases the number of students who need or qualify for some services, such as school meal programs. Schools can take actions to identify, support, and communicate with families who need to initiate new services as schools prepare to open. Administrators can work with community partners to plan for additional school-based services and programs during the transition back to normal schedules in anticipation of an increased need for mental health services.

## What is cohorting?

Cohorting (sometimes called podding) is a new term for a strategy that schools may use to limit contact between students and staff as part of their efforts to limit transmission of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19). These strategies work by keeping groups of students – and sometimes staff – together over the course of a pre-determined period of time. Ideally, the students and staff within a cohort will only have physical proximity with others in the same cohort. This practice may help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by limiting cross-over of students and teachers to the extent possible, thus:

- Decreasing opportunities for exposure or transmission of SARS-CoV-2
- Reducing contact with shared surfaces
- Facilitating more efficient contact tracing in the event of a positive case
- Allowing for targeted testing, quarantine, and/or isolation of a single cohort instead of school-wide measures in the event of a positive case or cluster of cases

Cohorting strategies are common practice in many elementary schools across the United States. Many elementary school students have the same teacher and classmates during the entire school year. Implementation of this strategy varies, depending on setting and resources. For example:

- Schools may keep cohorts together in one classroom, and have teachers rotate between rooms.
- Schools may alternate cohorts by days or weeks, with cohorts assigned to specific days or weeks.
- Schools may adopt a hybrid approach, with some cohorts assigned to in-person learning and others assigned to online learning.

Evidence of the impact of cohorting on spread of COVID-19 is limited. Some evidence from other viral disease outbreaks and school reopenings in international settings suggests that cohorting may be an important tool for mitigating COVID-19 spread. However, it is essential to note that those studies were conducted in very different contexts, in communities with lower transmission levels.

## Additional resources for K-12 administrators

[Considerations for Schools](#)

[Face Coverings](#)

[Latest COVID-19 Information](#)

[Social Distancing](#)

[Cleaning and Disinfection](#)

[COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)

[People at Higher Risk](#)

[Guidance for Schools and Childcare Centers](#)

[Managing Stress and Coping](#)

[COVID-19 Prevention](#)

[HIPAA and COVID-19](#)

[Handwashing Information](#)

[CDC Communication Resources](#)

[Community Mitigation](#)

[OSHA Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)

[Approach for Monitoring and Evaluating Community Mitigation Strategies](#)

[FERPA & Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

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**Appendix E: Southbridge Public Schools COVID-19 Procedures and Regulations**



# **SOUTHBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS COVID-19 PROCEDURES & REGULATIONS**

**August 10 , 2020**

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# Critical Health & Safety Requirements

(Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations guidance pg. 4)

The Southbridge Public Schools adopted the health and safety requirements outlined by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Masks:** Masks are one of the most important tools to prevent transmission of the virus. From a facilities and operations perspective, it is important to consider how to best support adherence to masking, including putting up signs with reminders to wear masks and how to remove them safely, having a supply of masks for staff and students who may need them, safely disposing of soiled or unusable masks, and identifying spaces that are appropriate for mask breaks. The Southbridge Public Schools requires ***Masks covering the nose and mouth*** to be worn by all students (PreK – grade 12), staff, visitors, and vendors. Exceptions for meals, mask breaks, and medical exemptions are permitted.
- **Handwashing and hand sanitizing:** Enabling good hand hygiene practices is another key tool to mitigate transmission of the virus. From a facilities and operations perspective, enabling good hand hygiene practices spans from student and staff arrival at school until their departure. All students and staff are required to sanitize their hands upon entering the classroom, after using the bathroom, and before and after eating. Classrooms will be provided with hand sanitizer, and/or soap to accompany classroom sinks. Additionally, high traffic areas, main offices will have sufficient supplies to accommodate frequent hand washing, and having hand sanitizer readily accessible.
- **Physical distancing:** Physical distancing is a critical component in mitigating the transmission of the virus. Southbridge Public Schools planned for a physical distance of 6 feet for all classrooms and must be maintained between all person-to-person contact throughout the school day.
- **Creating cohorts wherever possible:** Directly related to physical distancing is the idea of creating cohorts (e.g. self-contained groups) of students wherever possible and limiting the cohort from interaction with others. Examples of cohorts could include an elementary school class, students on a bus, or groups of older students with similar schedules. By grouping students and staff into cohorts, interaction will be limited. Southbridge Public Schools will cohort students in Pre-K - grade 10.
- **Assigned seating:** Southbridge Public School is requiring students to have an assigned seat in each class and to the extent feasible for meals and other activities.

# Signage

(Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations guidance pg. 14)

In addition to the guidance below, your Tier I PBIS matrices should be included in the signage, and incorporate appropriate behavioral expectations for Mask wearing, Social Distancing, Handwashing, etc.

The Southbridge Public Schools requires clear and age-appropriate signage is posted in highly visible locations throughout school property, reminding students and staff to follow proper health and safety protocols.

Signage should be posted in the following key areas (non-exhaustive):

- **By handwashing and hand sanitizing stations:** To remind individuals of the proper way to clean and sanitize hands
- **In bathrooms:** To remind individuals to properly clean and sanitize hands, utilize no-touch solutions as much as possible
- **By entry/exits:** To remind students to wear masks and maintain physical distance
- **By eating areas:** Use markers to map out entry/exit flow for students, to space out lines for students picking up their meals, and to identify distancing between students as they eat. Post signs to remind students to **avoid sharing food, utensils, and drinks**
- **By mask break areas:** To remind individuals to maintain 6 feet of physical distance and to follow correct mask removal procedure
- **In classrooms:** To remind individuals of physical distancing, reduce sharing of items, and keep masks on
- **Around playgrounds:** To encourage physical distancing while outside and maintain cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch areas
- **In hallways:** Use well-marked lines on the floor to encourage physical distancing and indicate direction of travel, especially in small hallways. Include signage to encourage healthy behaviors (e.g., wearing of masks)
- **Next to frequently shared equipment:** Post signs to remind students and staff to wipe down frequently shared equipment (e.g., computers and keyboards) before and after use
- **Areas where queueing may occur:** Use well-marked lines on the floor to encourage physical distancing
- **By closed areas:** Mark off closed areas

# School Cleaning and Disinfecting

(Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations guidance pg. 14)

Although it is not the main way the virus spreads, it may be possible for an individual to get COVID-19 by touching an object that is contaminated and then touching their own mouth, nose or possibly eyes. The Southbridge Public Schools will ensure facilities are properly cleaned and disinfected each day following the guidelines below:

- **Frequency:** Cleaning and disinfecting will occur at least daily for shared spaces and furniture. For high-touch surfaces (e.g., door handles, light switches, toilet seats) cleaning and disinfecting should occur three to four times per day and/or between uses.
  - **Desks:** Desks should be cleaned at least daily. For situations when cohorts of students move between classrooms or where meals are eaten at desks, cleaning of desks must take place between classes and before and after meals. Cleaning of desks can be done by students or custodial staff. Carefully choose disinfectant solutions that require a short dwell or drying time and are appropriate with food surfaces.
  - **Electronics:** Consider putting a flat, wipeable cover on electronics that are difficult to clean (e.g., keyboards). Follow manufacturer's instruction to determine the appropriate disinfectant solution and how to properly clean and disinfect. If there is no guidance, use alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 60 percent ethanol or 70 percent isopropanol. If shared, electronics must be cleaned between use by students or custodial staff.
  - **Outdoor play areas:** High-touch surfaces made of plastic or metal should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily or between use by custodial staff.

# Learning Spaces

(Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations guidance pg. 8-9)

- **Desk Spacing:** The Southbridge Public Schools requires student chairs to be placed 6' apart from each other and 6' from the teacher's desk. There must also be 1.5 feet of space around the perimeter of the room.
- **Clear spaces:** All classrooms and other spaces in the school building (auditorium, library, etc.) must be cleared of any non-essential items or furniture to maximize available space. The Southbridge Public Schools requires each classroom to include student desks, a teacher's desk, and remain free of other items. There should be no personal items in classrooms
- **Outdoor spaces:** The Southbridge Public Schools recommends, when feasible, the use of outdoor spaces for classes, breaks, meals, and other activities.
- **Spaces for mask breaks**
  - **Purpose:** The Southbridge Public Schools requires a minimum of two mask breaks per day for students (e.g. mealtime and recess). Additional mask breaks may be scheduled, ideally outdoors. It is recommended that students in early elementary have additional mask breaks throughout the day.
  - **Physical Distancing Requirements:** The Southbridge Public Schools requires students to be at least 6 feet apart for mask breaks. Consider using tape or other markers to identify where students should be to maintain 6 feet of separation. Hand washing facilities or hand sanitizer must be available upon entering and leaving this space. Provide napkins or paper towels for masks to be set on (inside face up) when removed. Consider adding signage in mask break areas on how to properly put on and take off masks.

## Considerations for early childhood and younger elementary classrooms:

- Remove all soft and cloth-based materials, such as rugs, pillows, stuffed animals, and dress-up clothing. Children can bring their own stuffed animal, but it cannot be shared.
- In lieu of forcing young children to sit continuously at desks, consider making laminated mats with children's pictures. Washable mats, plastic trays, and other items which can be easily cleaned can be used to define space for each student.
- **Learning centers:** Instead of having different small groups of children (three to four, depending on space available) rotate among different learning spaces as they engage in different activities, consider having each small cohort remain in one location and have materials for the next "center" brought to them.
- **Marking spaces:** Consider marking spaces with footprints facing the correct direction the children's feet would be pointing to indicate one way in and one way out.

# Shared Items

(Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations guidance pg. 8-9)

- **Limit sharing:** The Southbridge Public Schools discourages sharing of materials. In unavoidable circumstances when items are shared, they must be cleaned before being used by other students.
  - To the extent possible, limit sharing of electronic devices, toys, games, learning aids, art material and other items that are difficult to clean or disinfect. Limit the use of supplies and equipment to one group of children at a time, and clean and disinfect items between uses.
  - Library books may be checked out if students clean their hands before and after use and if students only select books from the shelves, instead of the return area. Books and other paper-based materials are not considered a high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning procedures.
  - Identify and develop new classroom protocols that reduce passing supplies or items between students.
- **Hand hygiene:** Southbridge Public Schools require frequent hand washing or sanitizing, including before and after using shared materials, is an important control strategy that should be reinforced when objects and materials will be shared.
- **Storage:** Southbridge Public School requires student's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or areas with staggered access to these areas to maintain physical distancing if used.

# Bussing & Pick-up/Drop-off Protocols

(Fall Reopening Transportation July 22 guidance p. 1, 5-6)

The Southbridge Public Schools is requiring several core practices to be implemented to support safe school bus operations this fall:

- **Masks:** The Southbridge Public Schools requires all staff and students on the bus, regardless of age, to wear masks at all times. Exemptions for students due to medical and/or behavioral reasons – and associated protocols – are further described later in this guidance.
- **Distance:** The Southbridge Public Schools require students to be seated no more than one student per bench, alternating sides for each row, which allows students to maintain approximately 3 feet of physical distance. Children from the same household may sit together and in closer proximity (e.g., two students per bench).
- **Ventilation:** The Southbridge Public School requires windows open at all times during bus operation, unless not possible due to extreme weather conditions.
- **Seat assignments:** The Southbridge Public Schools requires students to be assigned to a single bus and a particular seat. Students boarding the bus at the beginning of the route should be assigned seats at the *rear* of the of the bus, and students boarding the bus at the end of the route should be assigned seats at the front. Upon arrival at school, the bus should be unloaded in a controlled manner, starting from the front of the bus and emptying sequentially to the back.
- If children become sick during the day, they should not be permitted to travel home via the school bus
- **Bus monitors;** The Southbridge Public Schools will ensure that each bus is assigned a bus monitor to ensure strict adherence to the health and safety guidelines outlined below.
  - Bus monitors should be appropriately trained to observe students upon entry. If students appear symptomatic, and a parent/caregiver is present to take them home, they should not be permitted to enter the school bus. If a parent/caregiver is not present to take them home, bus monitors should refer students who may be symptomatic to the school nurse immediately upon arrival.
  - If a student who may be symptomatic must board the vehicle, they should be spaced at least six feet from other students as feasible. Close off areas used by the student, and do not use those areas again until after cleaning and disinfecting.
  - Signs will be posted at bus entrances clearly indicating that no one may enter if they have symptoms of respiratory illness or fever.

## Pick-up and drop-off protocols

Southbridge Public School requires each school Principal to establish procedures for student entry and dismissal including a plan for traffic, drop-off, and pick-up that complies with physical distancing guidelines

# Arrival & Dismissal

(Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations guidance pg. 19-20)

Each school in Southbridge will develop Arrival & Dismissal procedures that adhere to the following guidance:

- **Arrival to school:**

- Prioritize overall safety considerations, (e.g. child welfare, preventing intruders and weapons) in planning school arrival/exit.
- As practical, consider assigning multiple entry points or staggering arrival times to avoid crowding in entry areas.
- Post appropriate signage and reminders about the health and safety requirements that everyone needs to follow.
- Ensure hand washing or sanitizing is available upon entry, as well as appropriate disposal containers.
- Ensure that all students, staff, and visitors, with noted exceptions for medical needs, are wearing masks covering their nose and mouth.
- Ensure that additional masks are available at the entry as may be necessary.
- Consider having staff monitor entry to ensure everyone properly disinfects their hands and is wearing masks.
- While there are no screening procedures required at the point of entry, school staff should observe students throughout the day and refer students who may be symptomatic to the school healthcare point of contact

**Dismissal from school:** Consider designating multiple exit points, staggering dismissal times, and monitoring handwashing or hand sanitization upon exit. Before students are dismissed, confirm they have gathered all personal belongings before leaving, especially those that require cleaning at home.

# Movement within the building

(Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations guidance pg. 5)

Each school in Southbridge will develop movement procedures that adhere to the following guidance:

- **Movement protocols within facilities:** Develop clear movement protocols to avoid crowding, maintain cohorts, and minimize unnecessary person-to-person interactions. These protocols should include a plan for arrival and dismissal times, transitions between classes, and bathroom breaks, as well as outlining one-way movement pathways for hallways and cafeterias.
- Consider closing off hallways or areas that are too narrow for proper physical distancing and unable to be one-directional.
- **Stagger class transitions:** Develop a plan for transitions between classes to avoid crowding in hallways. Consider dismissing students grade-by-grade or according to other cohort models. Consider identifying facility monitors or class monitors to ensure students wear masks, maintain distance, and do not linger in the hallway.
- **Bathroom use:** Consider not allowing students to use the bathroom during transition times, and otherwise using a bathroom sign out system to reduce the number of students in bathrooms at one time. Ensure that students use their own writing instruments for the sign out log.

# Recess

(Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations guidance pg. 11)

The Southbridge Public School encourages all school administrators to have a plan for frequent movement breaks for students throughout the day. Plans should include the following considerations

- **Hand hygiene:** The Southbridge Public Schools requires hand washing facilities or hand sanitizer to be used upon entering and leaving recess space.
- **Cohorting:** Consider designating outdoor spaces to separate cohorts and support physical distancing while still providing recess opportunities.
- **Cleaning and disinfecting:** When possible, The Southbridge Public School custodial staff will clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces made of plastic or metal between cohort use.
- **Masking:** The Southbridge Public Schools recommends that if students are outdoors and maintain a distance of at least 6 feet, consider using recess as an unmasked time. Otherwise, monitor for adherence to masking requirements and at least 3 feet of distancing.
- **Activities:** Playgrounds can be used with staff monitoring to ensure physical distancing and masking. Consider whether the number of staff at recess will need to be increased. Additional staff may be needed during high-risk times (the beginning and end of recess) and in high-risk locations (enclosed or small, hard-to-see places on fixed equipment, or anywhere with high child density).

# Breakfast & Lunch

(Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations guidance pg. 17-18)

**Eating in the classroom:** The Southbridge Public Schools will serve all meals in the classroom. Based on CDC recommendations. Each principal will work with their food service staff to develop a plan for meals to be delivered to the classrooms.

Schools may consider having half of the class take an outdoor mask break or recess time while the other half eats and then switching these groups to enable 6 feet of distancing.

Plans will be developed including the required safety measures identified below:

- **Masks:** Ensure proper removal and placement of masks before eating. Masks should be removed by handing the ties or back/ear areas of the mask once seated. Do not touch the outside or inside of the part covering the face. While eating, masks should be placed on a napkin, paper towel, or other container on the table, with the inside of the mask facing up. Masks should be put back on before leaving the seat.
- **Distancing:** Individuals must be at least 6 feet apart at all times when masks are removed.
- **Hand hygiene:** Individuals must properly wash or sanitize hands before and after eating.
- **Water fountain usage:** Schools must provide potable water to students during mealtimes. Touchless or motion activated fountains are preferred for reusable water bottles, but other fountains, water jugs, or coolers can be used with single-use cups if students wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after fountain use. **Water fountains cannot be used for direct consumption.** High-touch surfaces on water fountains, jugs or coolers should be cleaned multiple times a day. Schools may also consider providing disposable water bottles during mealtimes.
- **Food allergies:** Stay informed of student needs, including food allergies or any needed feeding assistance to enable safe meal service and clean up.
- **Food waste removal:** Work with nutrition and facilities staff to determine protocols for waste management. Additional garbage cans may be needed to accommodate food waste, especially if classroom spaces are used for meals. Consider how normal cleaning procedures and schedules may be affected by new processes. Consider how students can support clean-up, such as cleaning their own eating area after the meal, if age appropriate and safe to do so.

**Schedule and distribution:** Establish a meal serving schedule and distribution process that limits interactions between classrooms and contamination of food items or meal distribution areas. For instance, schools may schedule classroom deliveries or set times for each classroom to pick up their meals from a central location. Meal distribution should limit high-touch surfaces and exclude buffet style serving. If meals are delivered to the classroom, consider how students can pre-order meals to ensure the correct number of meals are delivered to the class each day. Consider how to return meal service materials (i.e. carts, trays) to a central location each day

# Courses that require enhanced health and safety measures

(Guidance for Courses Requiring Additional Safety Considerations for Fall 2020 p. 2 AND Supplemental Information for Science Courses and Laboratory Work for Fall 2020 p/

The Southbridge Public Schools will follow the outlined guidelines for chorus, singing, brass or woodwind instrument use, physical education activities, dance, and theater class. All require enhanced health and safety measures, because they may involve increased respiration.

- **For chorus, singing, musical theater, and using brass or woodwind instruments**
  - If outdoors, with masks encouraged if possible, these activities can occur with at least 10 feet of distance between individuals.
  - At this time, these activities are not permitted indoors
  
- **For non-musical theater**
  - If outdoors, with masks encouraged if possible, these activities can occur with 6 feet of distance between individuals.
  - If indoors, with masks required, these activities can occur with 6 feet of distance between individuals.
  - These activities cannot occur indoors without a mask.
  
- **For physical education activities and dance**
  - Outdoors with 10 feet physical distancing students can be without masks
  - Outdoors with less than 10 feet physical distancing, students are required to wear masks
  - If indoors, all activities will occur with 6 feet physical distancing and masks are required.
  - These activities cannot occur indoors without a mask.
  
- **General lab guidance for in-school activities**
  - Follow the guidance on sharing equipment from the Guidance for Courses Requiring Additional Safety Considerations
  - Remove unnecessary equipment and materials from lab spaces.
  - Consider using outdoor spaces for lab work, as they provide opportunities for optimal physical distancing and investigations.
  - Determine which laboratory experiences are highest priority for all students in a grade level or in a discipline and what experiences can be modified or removed for the year.
    - Prepare alternative methods (e.g., videos, simulations, demos) for labs as needed for students to learn the concept.
  - After disinfecting shared equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE) (safety glasses, goggles, aprons, glassware, etc.), allow the equipment to dry for as long as possible in an area with sufficient ventilation away from students (at least 30 minutes) before use.
    - Consider using disposable materials and small-scale practices (e.g., micro-scale chemistry experiments, which reduce supplies needed) to reduce sanitation needs.
    - Designate a bin or space for students to place materials that need to be disinfected.
    - Wearing protective goggles in school laboratories is required by Massachusetts law (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 55C). Extra attention should be paid to goggles, as

they come into close contact with the face and eyes. Goggles must be disinfected between uses.

# Visitors and Volunteers

(Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations guidance pg. 19-20)

Southbridge Public School visitor and volunteer policy is based on the guidelines outlined below, in addition no interns, student teachers, etc. will be working in Southbridge during the 2021 school year.

- **Reduce outside visitors or volunteers:** No outside visitors and volunteers are permitted, except for contracted service providers for the purpose of special education, required support services, or program monitoring as authorized by the school or district. School secretaries (or designee) will enforce this protocol.
- **Single entry/exit:** Each school building will designate a single entry and exit point for all visitors to be visually screened and logged in. For visitors who need to enter, they should first gain approval, be briefed on school COVID-19 policies, and verify they do not have symptoms. Ensure that these individuals all are wearing masks covering their nose and mouth at all times and are aware of any other health and safety protocols for the school.
- **Track visitor log:** A log of all visitors must be kept and maintained for 30 days, with the date, contact phone number, arrival/departure times, and areas visited within the building for each visit.
- **Minimize parent/family visits** will only occur only in the school office and/or outside spaces, if appropriate.
  - Visitors necessary for drop off or pick up must wear masks.
  - Schools should encourage only one guardian to visit a building when possible and continue to utilize virtual communication options with families (e.g., for parent-teacher conferences).
  - It is recommended that the same adult drop off and pick up the child each day if it is necessary that they enter the building.

**Restrict visitor time:** Schools can also consider restricting visitor access to limited times when classes are in session (i.e., at times when there will not be many people in the hallways)



# Welcome to Southbridge Public Schools

## Please Read before requesting entrance

Southbridge Public Schools is following the health guidelines including Mask wearing and Social Distancing guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control. If you do not have a mask, one will be provided to you. Please let the secretary know if you need one and it will be brought to you. The mask must be in place prior to entering the building

## VISITORS

Due to the global Pandemic of COVID-19, The **Southbridge Public Schools is not allowing outside visitors and volunteers into school buildings**, except for contracted service providers for the purpose of special education, required support services, or program monitoring as authorized by the school or district.

## PARENTS/GUARDIANS

- Only 1 family member is allowed into the building at a time. If you have children with you, let the secretary know and she will come to the door.
- Report directly to the main office and wait outside the door until directed to enter. Maintain 6 feet distance between yourself and other people waiting

# Medical Waiting Room

(Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations guidance pg. 10)

Each Southbridge school building will have a medical waiting room that meets the requirements outlined below.

- **Purpose: Each school** must identify a separate space from the nurse's office for the Medical Waiting Room. The Medical Waiting Room will be used when a student presents COVID-19 symptoms and needs to be separated. The Medical Waiting Room must be a self-contained space, and near an exit/entrance and with a dedicated bathroom whenever feasible.
- **Staffing:** When occupied, the Medical Waiting Room will be monitored by an appropriate staff member.
- **Masks requirement:** Masks are always strictly required in this space for all students and staff. The CNA supervising this space will always maintain 6 feet of physical distance, wear a N95 mask, and wear a face shield or goggles, if needed. If a student is unable to wear a mask, there should be no other students in this room.
- **Hand hygiene:** Hand washing facilities or hand sanitizer will be used when entering and leaving the space, as well as before and after eating.
- **Food/drink:** If any food or drink must be consumed before the student is picked up, the individual will be walked outside to consume food or drink if possible (because mask will have to be taken off for eating). If not possible to go outside, only one student will consume food or drink at a time in the medical waiting room. All other students and staff will remain at least 6 feet away.
- **Ventilation:** When possible, this space should have windows that open and exhaust directly into the outdoors. Depending upon the facility, other options should be explored to increase ventilation to this area and/or otherwise improve the air filtration.
- **Size:** This space should be large enough to accommodate several individuals at least 6 feet apart. All people in the COVID-19 waiting room must be as far apart as possible and no less than 6 feet apart, even when masked.

# Protocol: Student or staff tests positive for COVID-19

(Protocols for responding to COVID-19 scenarios in school, on the bus, or in community settings, pg 7-9)

1. The student or staff member must remain at home (except to get medical care), monitor their symptoms, notify the school, notify personal close contacts, assist the school in contact tracing efforts, and answer the call from the local board of health or Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative. For most people who have relatively mild illness, they will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days **and** until at least 3 days have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms.
2. The student's parent/caregiver or the staff member should inform the proper school official (e.g. a designated person that is the COVID-19 school lead) that the individual has tested positive for COVID-19. The designated COVID-19 school lead in turn notifies others as pre-determined by the school (e.g., school leadership, school nurse or school medical point of contact, building management, maintenance).
3. Determine whether the student or staff member was on the premises during the time frame that started two days prior to symptom onset (or testing positive if not symptomatic) until the time of isolation.
  - a. If so, promptly close off areas visited by the COVID-19 positive individual until such areas can be cleaned and disinfected, if they have not been cleaned and disinfected already.
  - b. Promptly clean and disinfect the student's or staff member's classroom and any other facilities (e.g., extracurricular facilities) visited by the individual, if that has not been done already.
  - c. Promptly clean and disinfect the bus(es) the student or staff member was on, if any, and if not already done.
4. **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (e.g., student has self-contained classroom throughout the day):**
  - a. Send a communication to the other families in the student's class (e.g., cohort) that there has been a positive test without naming the individual student or staff member who tested positive.
  - b. Communications sent to families/staff should:
    - i. Inform them there was a positive test (not the specific individual) in the self-contained classroom.
    - ii. Explain that since they were within this cohort and may have been within 6 feet of the person with a positive test, they are considered a "close contact" and therefore should be tested. (In cases where the student may have been in close contact with others outside their cohort, having assigned seating and keeping up-to-date seating charts will help identify who should be instructed to be tested: specifically, those who were sitting next to the student, plus any others who also had close contact with the student.)
    - iii. Instruct those designated as close contacts to isolate prior to their test and while waiting for the results. In general, as the highest yield test will be a few days after the exposure, ideally, the test should occur no sooner than

day 4 or 5 after the last exposure. (In other words, if an exposure lasted several days, the best time to test is 4 or 5 days after the end of the exposure period.)

- iv. Explain that if close contacts choose not to be tested, the student or staff member should remain home in self-quarantine for 14 days.
  - v. Remind families and/or staff of the importance of not having contact with higher-risk individuals (e.g., grandparents and those with underlying medical conditions).
  - vi. Remind families and/or staff of the list of COVID-19 symptoms for which to monitor.
- c. If the school learns the results of the original COVID-19 positive test in the middle of a school day when the rest of the cohort is in class:
- i. Make sure these students are wearing masks, including in kindergarten and first grade. Extra masks as may be needed should be provided by the school. Enforce strict physical distancing. Require students to wash their hands.
  - ii. The school should quickly identify the individuals who may be “close contacts” of the student who tested positive and notify students and their families.
  - iii. Caregivers of students in the class or other close contacts may pick students up prior to the end of the day. Caregivers must wear a mask/face covering when picking up their student. Students who are close contacts and students with any symptoms should not ride the school bus to get home. Caregivers and students, as well as staff, should wash their hands upon arriving at home and change their clothes as a precaution.
  - iv. Close contacts should not come back to school until they have received the results of testing (or elected to instead quarantine for 14 days) and are asked to communicate their test results to the school.
- d. As feasible, to assist with contact tracing, make a list including phone number and email of any other close contacts the student or staff member had, beginning two days before the onset of symptoms (or positive test if asymptomatic) until individual was isolated. Instruct those students and/or staff members to get tested according to the same protocol as the student’s cohort above.

**5. MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL (e.g., no single self-contained classroom):**

- a. The school should identify the student’s or staff member’s possible “close contacts” based on the assigned seating charts. The lookback period should begin two days before symptoms appeared (or two days prior to the date of the positive test if there were no symptoms) and include up until the time the student was isolated. Consider students and staff members who were within 6 feet of the individual for 10-15 minutes in class, on the school bus, or at extracurricular activities.
- b. Follow the communication and other relevant Elementary School protocols above.
- c. Close contacts should be tested for COVID-19 at one of Massachusetts’s test sites. Sites may require pre-screening, a referral, and/or an appointment.
- d. Instruct the student or staff member to isolate while waiting for the results of their test.
- e. An individual who does not wish to be tested should instead quarantine for 14 days and until asymptomatic.

**6. IF OTHERS IN THE SCHOOL TEST POSITIVE:** Perform all steps under this protocol for that person. **ALSO FOLLOW:** “Protocol: Presence of multiple cases in the school.”

**7. IF NO OTHERS IN THE SCHOOL TEST POSITIVE:** Close contacts can return to school immediately if they test negative and do not have symptoms; however, strict mask wearing covering the nose and mouth must be maintained at all times. The wearing of masks includes K-1 students for this 14-day period. If they have symptoms but test negative regardless, they should wait until they are asymptomatic for 24 hours before returning to school.

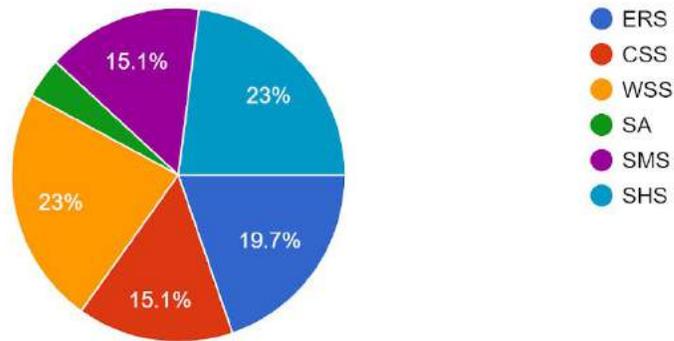
**Any area** of the school visited by the COVID-19 positive individual must be closed off and/or cleaned and disinfected. The area can be used 12 hours after cleaning/disinfecting has occurred.

## **Appendix F: Southbridge Public Schools Employee Surveys**

## SEA Survey Results: RETURN TO WORK

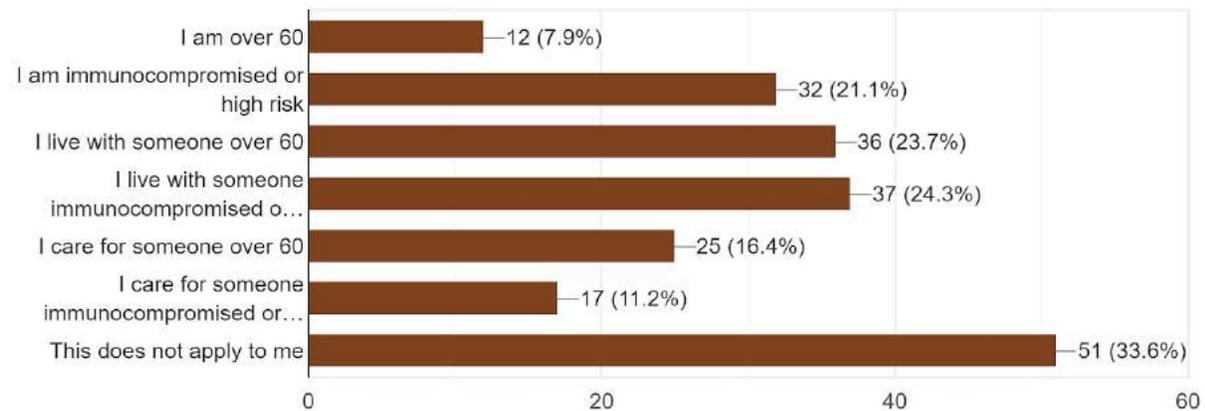
Select your building (if you are shared staff, please select the building you spend the most time).

152 responses



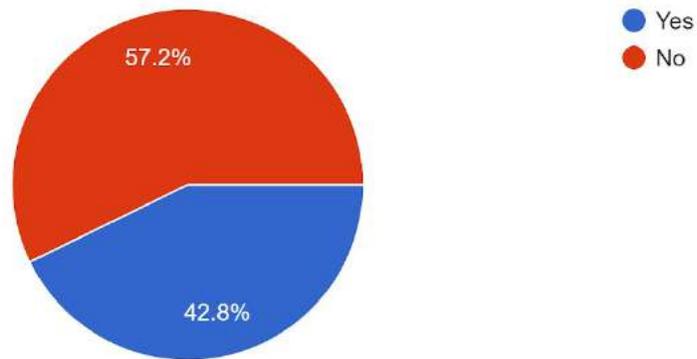
Are you, or is someone you live with or care for currently over the age of 60, immunocompromised, or high risk? (Please check all that apply)

152 responses

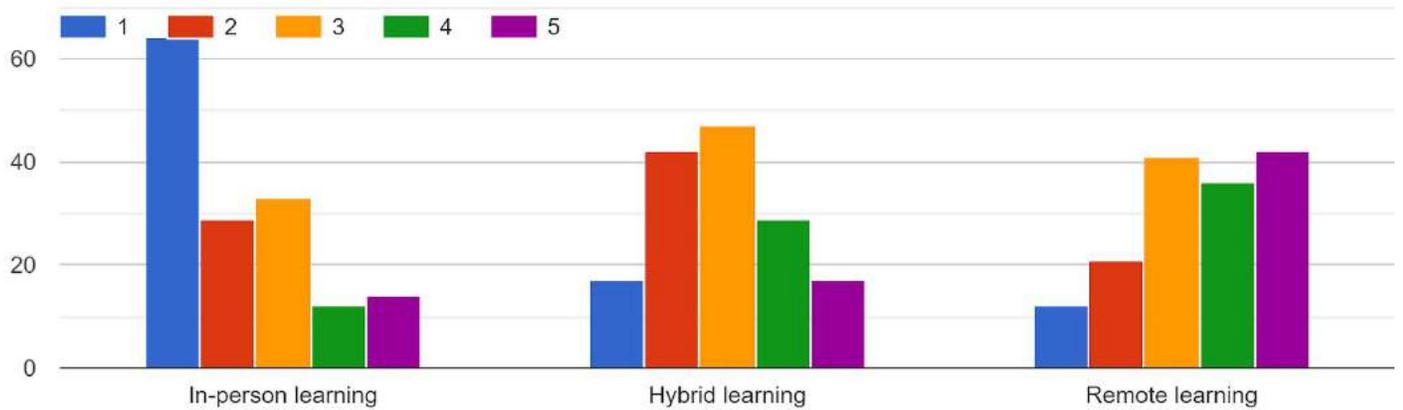


## Do you have school-aged children?

152 responses

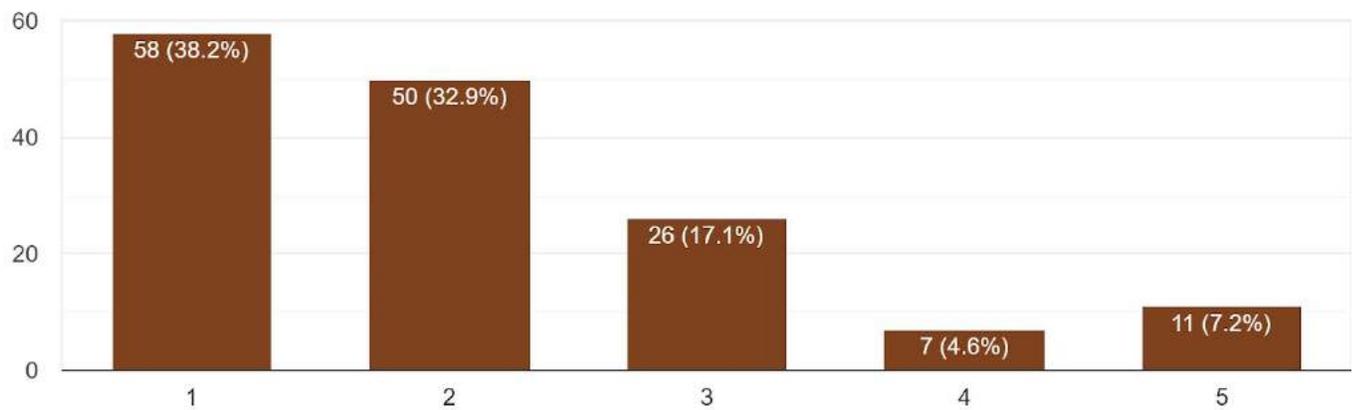


On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the least comfortable and 5 being the most comfortable, how comfortable are you with the following?



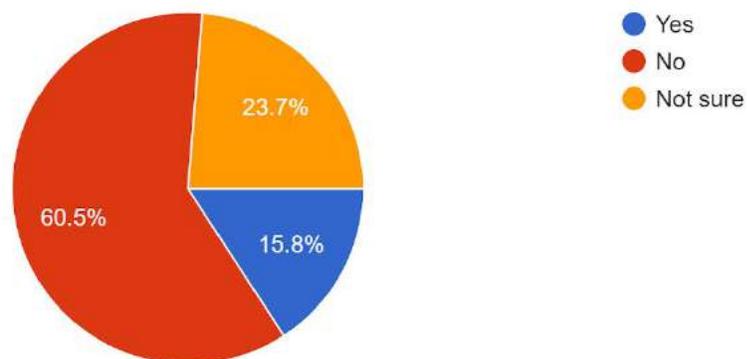
On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the least confident and 5 being the most confident, how confident are you that bathrooms and other common spaces i...and staff, given social distancing requirements?

152 responses



In your experience, does your workspace (classroom, office, break out room, etc.) have adequate ventilation?

152 responses



Do you have any COVID concerns about the conditions of your classroom or workspace? If so, please name them.

106 responses

- Who is going to be responsible for sanitizer if my room on a daily basis? Will we have adequate PPE supplies?
- No AC and the air is terrible already, windows don't open enough to actually be able to get on any amount of air that would help.
- Primarily ventilation, in addition to adequate cleaning procedures
- The amount of children being placed in one classroom
- Sub-separate classroom. It will be absolutely impossible to distance staff from students, and extremely difficult to distance students from each other. It will also be nearly impossible to use our specific teaching strategies while having our faces covered and we will not be able to physically prompt responses.
- No
- 1) I don't know if the air recirculation rate for my school or classroom meets the CDC's recommendation. What is the air refresh rate in the building? 2) How many students will be in my classroom? 3) Where and when my students eat lunch? 4) If we have indoor recess, will students need to provide their own toys? 5) If I need to self-isolate, will my students need to as well? 6) Can I deny a student access to my classroom or have a student removed from my classroom if he/she refuses to wear a mask and does not have a medical excuse? 7) Will teachers/staff fill-in a daily questionnaire before reporting to work? (Ex: CDC's COVID Self-assessment ) How will this data remain private? 8) Will teachers/staff have daily temperature checks? 9) If I suspect a coworker needs to self-isolate how do I report that information? 10) If a coworker refuses to wear a mask, will they be admitted into the building and/or removed? 11) Will parents be admitted into the building? 12) How will I be notified if parent/guardian or adult living in the household of a student is positive for Coronavirus? Will that student be admitted into the building? 13) If a coworker repeatedly fails to social distance how do I report that violation? What repercussions will that person face? 14) If I die from COVID that was contracted at school, does the school have an insurance policy on me that will be paid out to my surviving spouse? 15) If I am in a high risk group, will I be required to return to school or can I work remotely? 16) Will the district provide regular free Coronavirus testing and antibody testing for teachers and staff?
- I'm not sure there is sufficient space to properly social distance
- Space for desks, students, teachers and materials
- Ventilation in the classroom and all over the building
- Students are too liberal, it needs to be strict policies in place and make them follow it.
- Students will not stay away from each other in the classrooms or while transitioning in the hallways. The hallways are narrow and will be impossible to maintain a safe distance.
- Would prefer students have individual desks versus tables
- Heating vents get dusty and dirty often.
- The interior classroom I am assigned does not have windows that open for fresh air ventilation. The classroom size does not permit for adequate social distancing and air circulation/ventilation in a classroom setting per CDC guidelines.
- The art room has large tables that in the past have held 4-5 students each. It will be challenging with those numbers to create 6 feet of space for students.
- Art materials have traditionally been shared, we will need to have individual sets of materials for students in five classes, times two each semester. Possible? Not currently.
- When will we begin to plan and make needed adjustments?

- The wasn't adequately cleaned prior to covid, how will the custodial staff keep up with a nightly thorough cleaning?
- Ventilation is horrible. School crowded normally, not enough rooms. Some teachers already have to teach in the hallway.
- There are too many students moving from second to third grade at CSS...class size will be big too big to space students out safely. The ventilation is horrible in the building. Mold in second grade rooms, second floor is too hot and some windows do not open properly...temps in the 90s! First floor is also very hot and I've heard fans will not be allowed?? I am also concerned about kids eating in the classroom. Who will clean the rooms properly after masks have been off while eating and where will kids go when this is happening? Who will watch all of the different classrooms...coverage is a concern. Where are mask breaks? Who will provide cleaning materials and sanitizer? In the past, I have purchased sanitizer because I did not typically get many donations. Who will clean the room? How often will this be done? How will we know it has been done? Will there be additional custodial staff in place? When this started I was given a spray bottle and roll of paper towels...not very reassuring.
- My classroom is smaller to accommodate small groups. At max (with distancing guidelines) there could be 6 students in the room as opposed to the recommendation of 10.
- Social distance
- Lack of air conditioning, temps can raise to over 95 when school starts well into September.
- SHS has a high enrollment
- Enough masks, sanitizer, shields, cleaning between classes. No lunch in the classroom. MAX of 10 children per classroom. Monitoring the class via proximity is not happening anymore. Evaluation matrix given these conditions must be renegotiated. I am not monitoring halls, auditorium, release & arrival times. Buyout older teachers for early retirement. I fainted twice last year from high blood pressure & overheating. Not sure how that's going to work now. High school lost the principal. ????
- My classroom cannot accommodate 22 learners and 1-3 staff and be socially distanced.
- Spacing, keeping masks on, preps, breaks from masks
- Social distancing with large classes, music/ensemble classes, my classroom has no windows to allow for airflow
- The windows in my classroom cannot be open and is connected to another classroom, whose windows also do not open.
- No ventilation of any kind.
- Social distancing with the desks , increased class size, and the classroom size itself. Is this feasible?
- Too small to allow for 3-6 ft apart with all students in attendance
- Temperatures, No AC
- Ability to complete group work and labs with distance restrictions
- Airborne transmission. Even with masks and distance measures, there is no guarantee of safety.
- No appropriate ventilation
- Ventilation, difficulty of maintaining distancing with number of students and temptations for students to act unpredictably
- Keeping children 6 ft apart
- I haven't seen my classroom yet.
- Not enough room to properly distance, air quality, hot weather conditions
- Air quality/ventilation, extreme temperatures & wearing mask under those conditions; Very young students inability to social distance, keeping materials/manipulatives clean between student use (very young are oral)
- Close Interaction With parents especially if they are not wearing masks
- Speed of spread

- Working all day in small groups does not allow social distancing unless groups are much smaller than last year.
- Room too small for distancing
- I am concerned about the health and safety of staff and myself when helping a student in PASS, Life Skills or Bridge during an outburst.
- Non ventilating, size of room for only 3 feet apart.
- There is not enough space in the room to social distance
- Shared materials, distancing and mask compliance
- Yes. I know it will be impossible to keep all children 6 feet apart from each other. It will also be difficult to teach if I cannot come within 6 feet of my students. I also worry about keeping everything sanitized and how overuse of disinfectants may negatively impact the students.
- I am concerned that students will spread COVID 19 to each other and to their families and it will spread in community
- No air flow. Concerned to be in school In the month of September when it's hot on a second floor and having to keep windows closed
- Air ventilation is poor if we have to wear masks. The classroom has to be cool or people will overheat
- Radiator blowing indiscreetly would spread airborne diseases, also shared ventilation system would do the same
- Adequate social distancing
- Ventilation, distancing for students, amount of time students will be in the building. If one student contracts the virus, it effectively quarantines the entire school.
- I am concerned with the overall cleanliness of the building. A thorough, daily cleaning MUST be done, and classrooms/common areas should be cleaned by the custodial staff throughout the day. Teachers and students should NOT be responsible for disinfecting and cleaning the classrooms, rest rooms, or other common areas. It is essential that teachers have an adequate supply of hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes and/or disinfecting cleaner and paper towels, and tissues supplied by the district, NOT supplied by teachers. I am very concerned about adequate ventilation during the colder months when the heat is on and windows can't be opened.
- Social distance everywhere, disinfectant wipes all the time to clean desks and surfaces, cafeteria, teachers room etc.
- There is not enough space in a classroom to follow regulations.
- The number of students in the given space, adequate cleaning supplies
- My classroom is small so I'm concerned about the ratio of students to space.
- None
- Being located on the second floor, when school returns for the fall, classrooms are often in the 90s pretty much guaranteeing miserable conditions wearing masks
- None if we do it properly.
- Students in my class are ALL medically fragile and can't wear masks
- I pull small groups into a small room. Distancing is not possible.
- Cleaning of the classroom adequately. I went back and found food in my classroom and the room was disgusting. No cleaning had taken place in the desk surfaces. I don't want to have to clean after students leave.
- Students keeping face masks on
- Is there enough space to spread out the desks?
- I am concerned with PPE cost/ availability
- There is no way to separate the number of desks needed for student populations that are 3 feet apart, let alone the 6 ft required everywhere other than schools. If we remove all furniture but desks to accommodate as much space between desks, where will furniture be stored? What about all the items

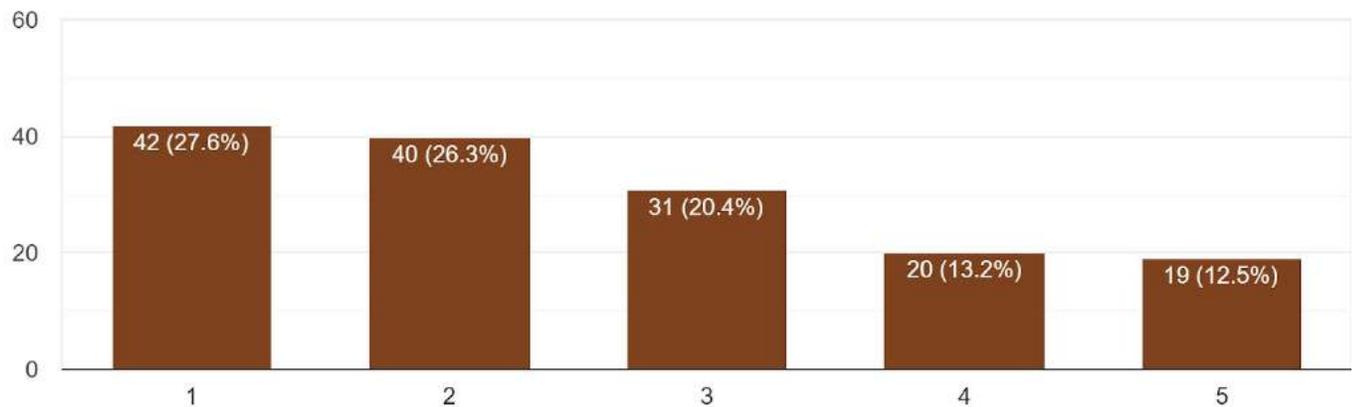
that are house on those supplemental pieces of furniture? Where will they be stored? Windows do not open enough to allow adequate air flow, rooms get extremely hot, and fans may not be allowed for safety reasons. Ventilation systems are very old and despite the best efforts of maintenance staff, often are in less than prime working order. One sink for washing 20 plus sets of hands throughout the day will be extremely time consuming. How will eating in the classroom be handled? Who will clean up after? How will the room with no ventilation be safe if 20 plus students are eating and talking with no masks ( because they are eating) for 25 minutes a day?

- I have no concerns related to the hygiene of my students and staff. My only concern is with social distancing requirements of young children due to space.
- Many regarding student care.
- Students spreading germs on materials, not leaving masks on, food contamination, students upset over wearing masks and emotionally not able to cope. Students have a difficult time remaining in their seats for 20 minutes and now will be in 85 minute classes and not able to have movement breaks. Several students also lack proper hygiene skills- bathing, blowing nose, using tissues, etc...How am I supposed to collect work if it could be contaminated or even distribute work if I end up unknowingly being a carrier? Will my sick days be used against something that is beyond my control and a result of having to return to work? Will there be hazard pay?
- My answer to the question about children- my children aren't in school yet but are ages 1 and 3. They will need to attend daycare 3 days a week again if school reopens where they could be exposed and will also be under the care of someone who is over 60 and also has heart problems the other 2 days a week. What if I bring the virus home to them and then have to take several days off in order to care for them?
- Yes, we don't have ventilation in the classroom..
- I am concerned about returning to the classroom and the exposure with all the inconsistencies and unknowns about COVID.
- Spacing in rooms, lunch, and hallways. Supplies for cleaning to fully disinfect. Access to hand washing with shared bathrooms and managing students with spacing in the lines in the hallway during the process.
- Social distancing is near impossible for 3 & 4 year olds. I will be responsible for changing diapers which also makes distancing impossible.
- Not enough space for social distance
- Our classrooms are hot with little airflow in the beginning weeks
- The high temperature of the room during the early weeks of the year.
- working with preschoolers, in a classroom without desk only tables, how to social distance, 3/4 touching toys and no masks. Very concerned.
- classrooms are not big enough for social distancing
- Confinement in a small space with 20 plus students and not adhering to the rules
- Our student's family's socio-economic status means many are forced to keep working and therefore are already at a higher risk for contracting covid. Opening schools in the fall will lead to increased spread and it will be difficult to know how quickly it is spreading due to the long incubation period. Additionally, the school is the main source of food for many students. Hungry students will be more likely to come to school despite being infected unless provisions are made to continue getting food to them when they are at home.
- I do not have windows to open.
- I am concerned with the amount of germs that are spread in a typical classroom with young children. I am also concerned with how difficult it will be to breathe in my room with a mask on all day. My classroom windows open to a courtyard with little to no air flow. It already gets pretty hot and stuffy in there and wearing a mask all day will be very challenging.

- Not all windows open. Room gets very hot. If we can't use fans it will be even hotter. Wearing masks all day and my students don't have too. Students not leaving the room all day.
- I am having difficulty envisioning the environment given the safety guidelines we are to follow. Elementary school students have a hard enough time understanding personal space, never mind "social distancing."
- I have concerns about the class sizes and how I am going to keep the masks on these students.
- I don't feel we will be able to space students 6 feet apart, especially when we only have tables, no desks.
- The office always has mildew and mold on ceiling tiles. Water collects in a pan in the ceiling from the air conditioner.

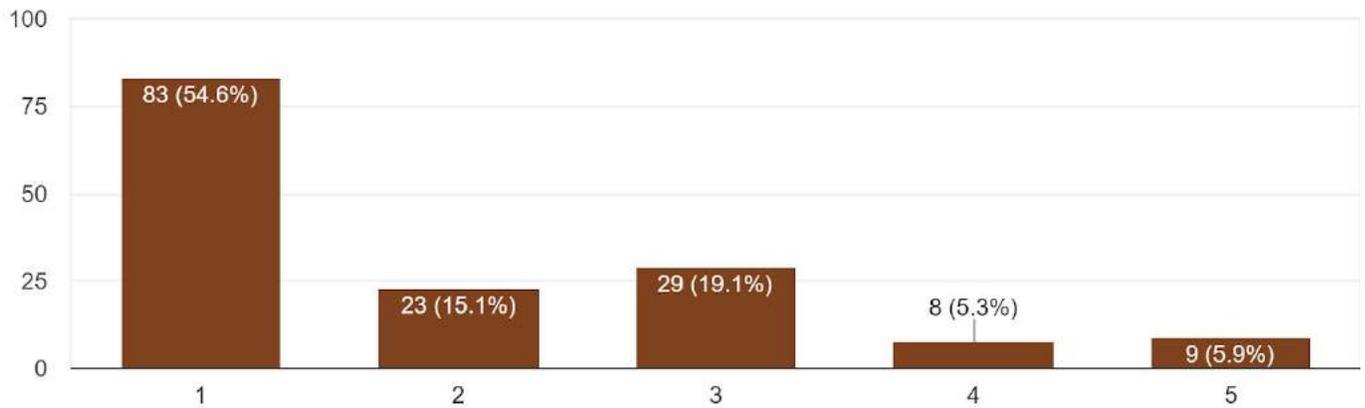
On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the least comfortable and 5 being the most comfortable, how comfortable do you feel about having to enforce mask wearing and social distancing with students?

152 responses



On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the least comfortable and 5 being the most comfortable, how comfortable are you with directly supervising lu...s would have to be removed for food consumption?

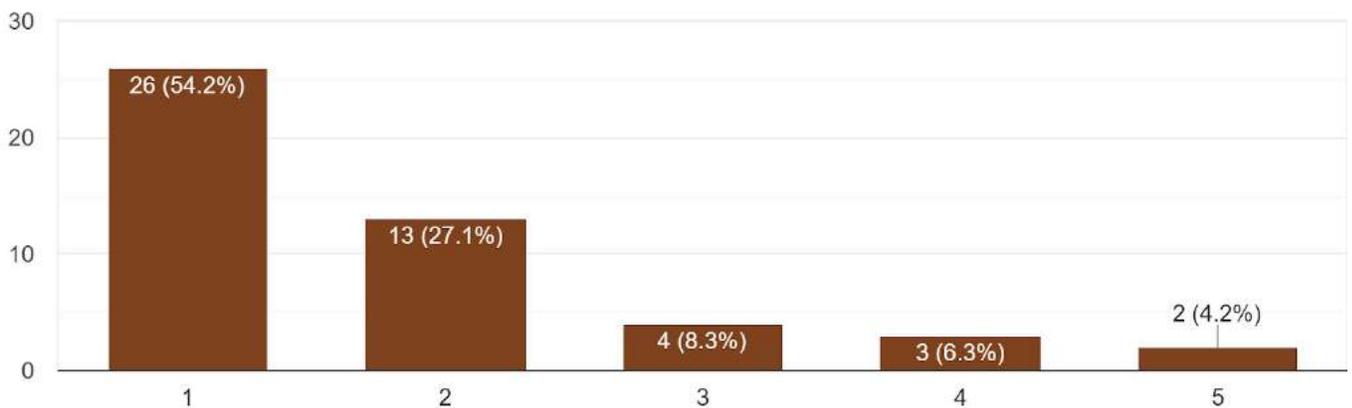
152 responses



THE FOLLOWING QUESTION IS FOR STAFF MEMBERS WHO WORK WITH OUR MOST MEDICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY FRAGILE STUDENTS.

For students who require specialized accommodations that require close, physical interaction or contact, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the least c...s, including those that require physical closeness?

48 responses



What accommodations would you need in order to return to working in any capacity (in-person, hybrid, remote) prior to returning?

93 responses

- Adequate training in remote teaching, for in-person thermometers for each teacher to monitor children's temperatures before entering the classroom. Hybrid Sanitizing rooms in between sessions, how would CPT meetings, teacher lunch, and prep be adjusted.
- Only half the class at a time is the max I would feel comfortable with and only half day at a time. No extended day because no way can these students be asked to sit at a desk alone all day and then on top of that we have an extended day. It's just not okay all for the students because the behaviors are going to be out of control to force a kid to sit alone for that long. 6 hours would be hard enough and we have more than that. Air Conditioning needs to be put in the classrooms. When are teachers going to get a break during the day if the kids have to be in our classrooms at all times. How are we supposed to prep when the kids would be in our room if they can't go to specials. I think that hybrid or online is the best situation to keep EVERYBODY SAFE. The teachers need to be a high consideration in this and not just all the focus on the students. The staff are just as important. We are getting all the students in the district computers so why not do remote then to keep everyone safe and slowly ease into opening up the school. All desks must be 6 feet apart for me to feel safe being in my room!! It is not okay that we are allowed to be at risk for 3feet when the rest of the world in every other place anywhere you go says 6 feet but for some reason it's okay for us to just have 3 feet. That's not okay at all. We should be kept safe too so 6 feet between every child.
- Healthy ventilation and air quality, enough breaks through the day (including time perhaps outdoors to remove a mask), enough cleaning supplies, relevant PD, flexibility for doctor's appointments and possibilities of needing to be available for my own children, COVID testing if in-person return
- Adequate training for health and safety. Adequate training for remote learning.
- Remote planning I need more communication and lesson plans with teachers
- Given the close physical interactions in my class, there is no feasible way to remain safe & distant until there is a vaccine.
- K & 1st grade students MUST wear masks!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- I prefer not to return to in-person instruction until a vaccine is developed and distributed to the entire staff and community. For hybrid and remote instruction, I would like a light, a microphone, and a tablet so that I can effectively use Jamboard and so that I can be easily seen and heard. I would also like a standing desk converter so that I do not need to sit all day. The Google Voice phone number issues to me was quite helpful, can I keep my number or get a new one?
- I'm not sure there are accommodations that can make it completely safe for in-person learning. For remote learning a good platform for online interactions with versatility and necessary technology for all students/staff are needed. For hybrid, my responses for in-person and remote learning both apply.
- Technology PD for hybrid/remote learning
- Proper ventilation with filters that are recommended by health professionals
- Classroom support for teachers and students, for when behaviors arise with having to wear masks and staying away from each other so the teacher can teach
- Assurances that the students will not be required to be in the classroom all day everyday. That they will be able to go outside and run around for their own sake.
- Understanding from administration that when they come into our rooms to "observe" us that they don't penalize us for all the adjustments we have had to make that may not be going smoothly.
- Teachers are already required to clean their own classrooms. It would be necessary to have unlimited access to cleaning supplies and time between transitions to thoroughly clean spaces. Policy would have to be created to ensure that parents would be truthful about their child's daily health and not send

sick children to school. Additionally, students would have to be consequenced accordingly for violating mask requirements.

- Desks, pencil boxes for each student, laptop/chrome book with Ethernet cable port because my home internet is not that good, hand sanitizer, cleaner, gloves, masks
- Safety measures in place for all.
- Remote Learning - Assurance that all students will have access to the internet and computers. Training must be provided for all students and parents on use of online learning, clear and specific guidelines at the beginning of the school year for work completion, grading, time on task/remote classroom participation, flexibility in class times i.e. starting later, evening opportunities. Textbooks are made available for students along with printed versions of assignments. There is a plan for special education and meeting accommodations/modifications for students along with training for staff. Printed material for parents must be available in English/Spanish and audio version.
- Hybrid - A clear, defined description of what is SMS Hybrid learning, how it will be implemented and maintained. An inclusion plan for special education students.
- Any in - person classes including Hybrid - A detailed plan covering all aspects of learning and safety protocols to include ongoing testing of students and staff, daily temperature checks, classes will not be held in interior classrooms, reduced class sizes, on going cleaning and access to cleaning supplies, masks, face shields and gloves. Adequate supplies of notebooks, writing utensils, computers, headsets, etc for individual student use/assignment. Only one teacher uses a classroom/no sharing of space.
- More support and training to create remote learning.
- Training for students and staff to understand what is expected of each of us, i.e. masks, physical proximity, hand cleaning etc. How do we work with non-compliance?
- We need to have an understanding of how we move in the building, in the classroom and how we implement a consistent by-in by all participants. We need to understand how we feed our combined schools in the AM as well as at lunches. Where do students congregate after bus drop off?
- If students need to work from home they will need materials to create art works. We need to have time and resources to reconfigure our classrooms to create individual space needs.
- The art materials need to be divided to create personal art materials rather than shared materials in the classroom, as well as having enough materials to do that and to give students a separate set of materials for use at home. We don't have anywhere near the materials currently to do this. Individual painting materials, drawing materials, and sculpture materials for in-class and at home use will be very challenging.
- Cleaning materials for high touch areas and hand sanitizer for use in individual classrooms.
- An understanding of how many students will be in a class and how we configure our classroom for 6 feet of separation for those numbers.
- (It has been estimated that 50% of people with COVID show no symptoms so we need to be very consistent.)
- Smaller class sizes...respect the guidelines. I think all teachers need a document camera for hybrid and remote learning. Other districts provided for teachers. More meaningful training...give us a choice to meet our individual needs. I would like mask breaks for teachers/staff.
- (Not an accommodation but I am concerned about sick time if we have to quarantine for 14 days.)
- Hybrid / remote
- Remote: working laptop and training on how to run remote small groups
- Better computers, air conditioning, daily scrub down of the classroom not done by me.
- There are so many issues to include in this area. Between masks, cleaning requirements, hand washing, student arrival, hallways/lockers, lunch, dismissal, interactions during the day, classwork

(paper)collection it feels like an overwhelming list of new areas teachers will be required to manage and monitor besides the dire consequences if it is not done properly.

- Internet support (does not stay connected at all times), masks, hand sanitizer, at home materials (white board, markers, other materials to teach while at home)
- Instrumental cleaning supplies, shields for instrumental students, drumsticks and mallets so students are not sharing, schedule/space flexibility to teach small ensembles rather than large ensembles to follow social distancing guidelines, training on developing distance lessons while simultaneously teaching in-person in case of hybrid model
- If we are to return in an in-person or hybrid manner, protective gear should be supplied to all students and staff along with the necessary cleaning supplies to ensure that all surfaces are clean between transitions.
- Masks and social distancing in place.
- Vaccine ideally, but air sanitation and bathrooms sanitation plus full cooperation of students and staff to self monitor and stay home.
- proper building care
- Proper gear
- Proper guidance and training
- I would be more comfortable with in person learning outside or in very large spaces.
- ?? I don't know
- More training for remote learning to be successful
- In person-ppe, disinfecting supplies, better air quality
- Hybrid- same & access to materials to teach remotely
- Remote- access to materials
- Well defined clauses and conditions in our teacher contract in case of being infected with Covid-19.
- More training for remote learning.
- A face mask and I would be happy to have protective gear for my clothing in case a student spits or needs to be escorted to a safe place.
- Clear expectations and communication
- None
- Individual supplies for students, ppe supplies, whatever to handle not only classroom ventilation but building ventilation.
- For in person I would need proper disinfectant cleaners, proper PPE, time for proper cleaning, space for distancing, proper ventilation, c19 testing done on all staff & students,
- For hybrid and remote I would need some training and some better technology for at home and computers for all students
- a bubble, guaranteed hazard free
- For any in-person instruction, I would need cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer and PPE to be supplied. I would also expect there to be a way to keep all people socially distanced (which I do not think is possible).
- Hybrid and remote I can prepare for
- Further training on remote counseling for remote learning, it would be useful to have a unified approach in expectations district wide as far as distancing and masks are concerned
- Proper sanitizing equipment, small class sizes for adequate spacing of students or proper technology for students at home.
- In person I would ask for smaller class sizes, computers and internet for each student. Proper ventilation, breaks where I can remove my mask, temperature checks and increased nursing staff.
- Before returning to work in-person, I would like to feel that district and state leaders care about the health and safety of teachers and their families. Currently, I do not think that is true. There should also

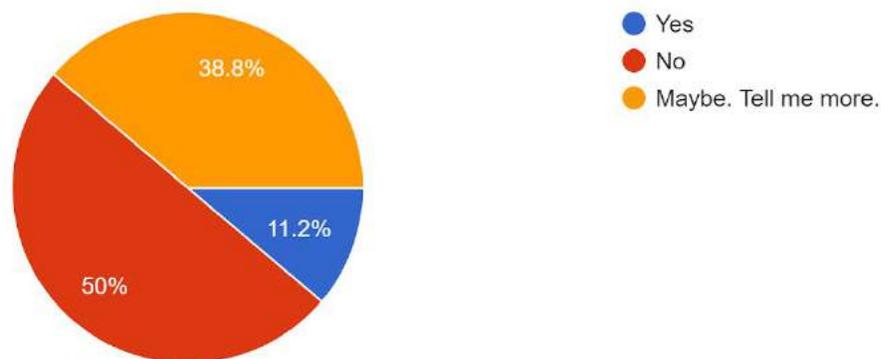
be a clear and non-negotiable plan in place for what happens when students refuse to wear masks, leave their assigned space, etc.

- Special face shield and disposable gowns all the time
- Provided cleaning supplies and sanitizer. Individual supplies for each student to prevent shared materials.
- I need TIME, like lots of it, in between the dissemination of a formalized plan and when we actually go back to teaching. It's tough to prepare with so much uncertainty.
- I also need CLEAR expectations and consistent messaging from the admin across building and central office.
- Social distancing, ventilation and temperature control
- Sanitizer wipes or spray.
- Remote please or covid testing
- Full face masks, gloves and coverings for our cloths
- PPE, more space, less students
- Hybrid
- No accommodations needed. No place to write other comments/suggestions. So, I'm a hands on kind of person. Webinars, modules, reading, training...anything sitting at a computer is not enjoyable for me. I'm an ea and certified teacher. I don't have children at home that I need to assist with their remote learning. I am willing to work closely with students who need some more support/motivation to complete assessments. (the ones who don't have support at home or won't complete work without someone "holding their hand" or those who have some gaps in their knowledge and just need someone there to help) Or, maybe when we enter the hybrid style I could teach 1 subject and go room to room teaching all 2nd or 3rd graders math/literacy. This could give the teachers a prep or lunch. "They" are talking about not having enough teachers to keep class sizes safe. I just wanted to throw out a couple suggestions for EAs. I spoke to a couple EAs and they would rather work with students too. I work with medically fragile students and I don't think they will be back 😞 and I attend morning meetings every day, but there is nothing I can do to support their remote learning.
- No clue!
- training
- A clear comprehensive plan room for the district.
- PPE and regular building sanitations
- Delayed start to accommodate the following accommodations: School supplied PPE, cleaning products, kleenex, hand sanitizer (hands free hand sanitizing stations throughout buildings like hospitals), overhauled HVAC systems to make sure air flow and quality is adequate, Professional development on Covid, distance learning, new programs PRIOR to the start of the school year, as well as ongoing once we are back.
- Sufficient supply of cleaning supplies (soap, hand sanitizer, tissues, sanitizing wipes, etc.); way to socially distance students using tables
- Adequate supplies, cooperation, and the ability to do my job without scrutiny.
- Face shield/ppi/
- There are no accommodations for in person learning that would make me feel comfortable about returning to school. Are we planning on screening every child daily before allowing them into the classroom? Even with screening and testing people are negative one day and positive the next. Until we have a vaccine in place we are risking the health and safety of children and staff. We can not control head lice, how are we going to control COVID!
- A vaccine
- Face shields?
- PPE/face shields and gloves

- how would you physically restrain a child, changing diapers in a close area in the bathroom
- clear expectations, uniform plan across district, clear schedule for transitions...
- Compliance from everyone, frequent testing of staff and students, hygiene
- I would like more training on remote and hybrid learning. If we do return I will have to come in and short of N95 masks there isn't a lot of accommodation that will make me feel comfortable.
- I would need adequate PPE and cleaning supplies for me and all students. I will also need sufficient time during the day to do all the cleaning that will be required. I am concerned that we will be using our prep time to do this- if that happens when are we supposed to prep materials? I am also concerned about the fact that we only have 2 copiers that we can use in our building. If we need to keep our distance from each other we will need more machines so that we are not waiting in line to get our copies like we normally have to do. Will the machines be sanitized after each use? I have so many questions as to how the classroom will function on a daily basis- shared supplies, materials, books etc, so I would need answers. I need to know what the model will look like for our district and my children's district. If our schedules don't mesh I will have a problem with childcare and may not be able to work.
- Lots of professional development on safety protocols for in-person and technology PD for remote learning.
- Masks, if remote then we need our school supplies/materials
- Masks should be required. Social distancing enforced. Hand sanitizer and wipes readily available.
- Extra masks for students who misplace them, extra cleaning supplies to wipe down computers, keyboards and mouses after each use.

Would you be interested in being part of a building-based committee on Health and Safety?

152 responses



# Staff survey - Return to School in the Fall

Thank you for finishing the year strong. As we plan for reopening school, we want to hear from you! Your feedback is critical. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is asking each district to draft plans to include in-person, remote, and a hybrid plan. Please provide your thoughts to help us better understand your needs and preferences as we approach the upcoming school year so we can best support you.

If you have questions about this survey or other related matters, you can contact [hrhelpdesk@southbridgepublic.org](mailto:hrhelpdesk@southbridgepublic.org)

1. 1. What is your role?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Teacher
- School Leadership
- Other School Staff (identify role in the question 2)

2. 2. If you selected "Other School Staff" in question one, please identify your job/role:

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3. 3. What school do you work in?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Eastford Road School
- Charlton Street School
- West Street School
- Southbridge Academy
- Southbridge Middle School
- Southbridge High School

4. 4. When schools open in the fall, there will be health and safety measures in place such as spacing students apart, required use of masks, regular handwashing, etc. What other suggestions for protections and procedures can you make that would increase your comfort upon your return to in-person work?

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5. 5. Do you have a medical condition that would interfere with the use of a face mask at school or a pre-existing condition that increases your risk of COVID-19? If so, what suggestions do you have to help accommodate your needs?

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6. 6. When schools reopen in the fall and students are expected to return to buildings with protective measures in place, what is the likelihood that you will choose to return to your position?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not likely (I will consider retiring/leaving)
- Somewhat likely (I expect to be there at this time)
- Highly likely (I am confident that I will return)

- 7. We are striving to create a remote learning plan that includes synchronous (live) and asynchronous content. Synchronous will entail each classroom to have a camera and microphone set up, allowing students to participate in live time from home. What procedures would you need to be in place for you to be comfortable teaching this way?

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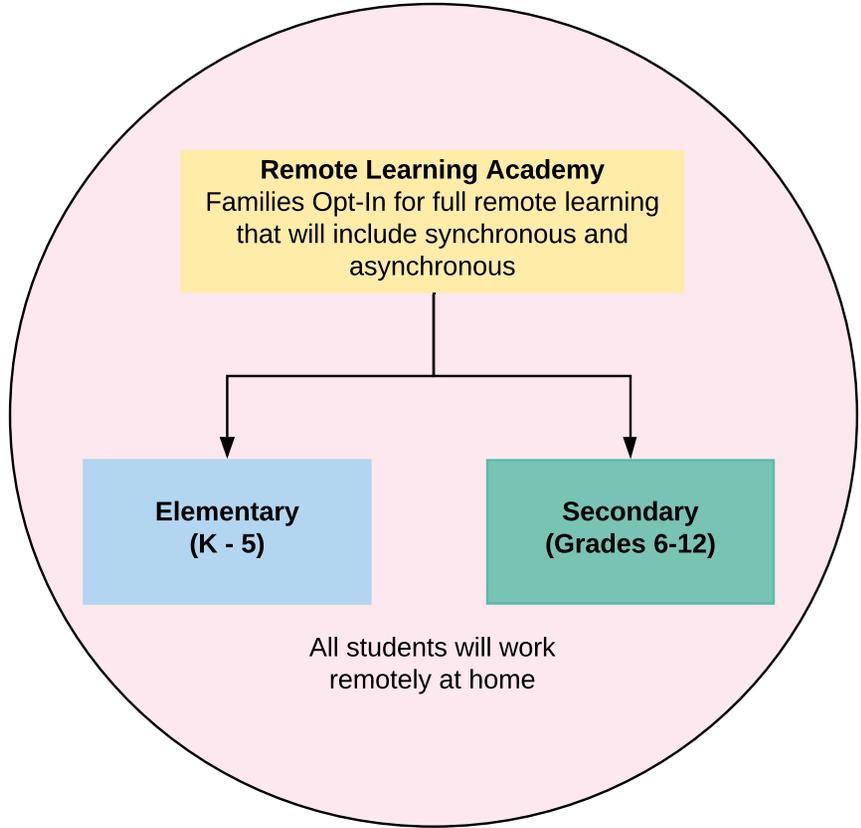
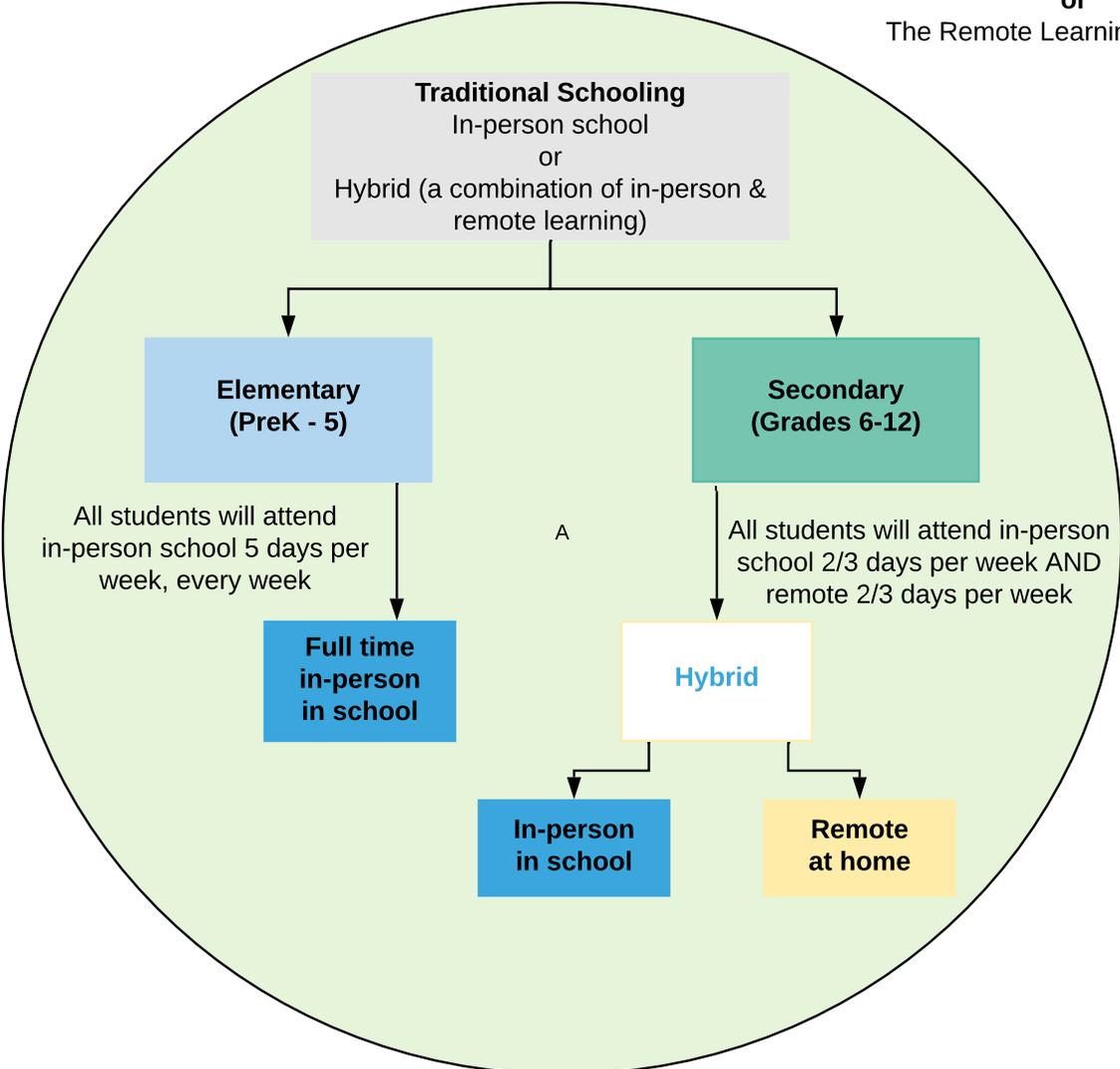
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Google Forms

## **Appendix G: COVID-19 Reopening Plan**

# SOUTHBRIDGE PUBIC SCHOOLS 2021 REOPENING PLAN

Families will Opt for either Traditional Schooling  
**or**  
The Remote Learning Academy



**Full District Remote**  
If COVID 19 circumstances change requiring the school or district to cease in-person learning.