



Southbridge Public Schools

132 Torrey Road, Southbridge MA 01550

Telephone: (508) 764-5450

September 2, 2020

Dear Families,

As we approach the first day of school on Monday, September 14th, I would like to provide you with several updates and to address some of your questions about our remote, hybrid, and in-person schedules for students. I'd also like to recognize the collaboration that families have shown in responding to our extended outreach efforts and by sharing questions through our various communication channels. Over the last several weeks, these responses have helped us to create a school reopening plan that is responsive to the community's needs regarding the unprecedented changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the first day of school less than two weeks away, it is important that you contact us if you have decided on remote instruction for your child since your last contact with district staff, so that we can finalize schedules, bus routes, and the distribution of Chromebooks. If you have not notified the district of your intent to have your child participate in remote learning by Monday, September 7th, we will assume that your child will report for in-person school on September 14th. Families who indicated that they would like to participate in remote learning, but have changed their minds and would like to have their student report to in-person learning, must notify the district before Monday, September 7. Changes from remote learning to in-person learning after September 7th are generally prohibited until the end of the first quarter for students in grades 6-12 and the first trimester for students in grades PreK -5. This means that the choice to attend remotely cannot be changed to in-person or hybrid until at least November due to requirements around planning schedules and classrooms.

Bus Routes and the numbers of buses will change this year because of COVID-19 safety procedures. This year each bus will have a bus monitor who will make sure that students who are boarding the bus are included on the bus route list. It will be important that students report to the correct bus stop on the correct day. Students in Southbridge Middle School and High School will have a hybrid schedule and will report to school two days a week. We are seeking to ensure that students do not accidentally report to school on days that they should be learning remotely. Student schedules are available via the Aspen student portal ([found here](#)).

For the White House cohort and the Red House cohort at the secondary level, we have made an effort to put students from the same household in the same color cohort. If you have received notice that two middle or high school students in your household are assigned to different color cohorts, please contact us by Monday, September 7th so that we can address the issue.

Many families have asked about Chromebooks. As you may know, our orders of Chromebooks are still arriving in the district. While we wouldn't ideally like the Chromebooks to still be in transit this close to the opening of the school year, the sharp increase in demand for Chromebooks from school districts across the country has caused a delay. We expect to share information about how to pick up Chromebooks as early as we can, along with

information for families that have applied for an internet hotspot. The district is planning to provide every student with a Chromebook. Every student will need a computer and internet connectivity. However, if a family has a computer at home and feels they do not need a Chromebook they are not required to take one. Given our concerns around delayed shipment, such a choice will help ensure that all students have access to a device sooner.

I am confident that as the school year begins, we are prepared to deliver a high-quality educational experience to all students, in line with the **guiding principles** that have guided our decision-making process since March when schools closed: 1) We will create an environment that is safe for our students and for all of our staff members, and 2) We will deliver the highest quality educational experience for students possible. The health and safety of our learning community come first in all decisions related to reopening.

In the Southbridge Public Schools, we are prepared for the 2020 - 2021 school year and we are ready to respond to any circumstances that arise. The foundation that we have created with systems such as PBIS will serve us well as we enter a new school year under unprecedented conditions. If you have any questions as the school year develops, please do not hesitate to reach out to your student's school or to help@southbridgepublic.org and ayuda@southbridgepublic.org to address your concerns.

Family Welcome Center

If you need to register a student who is new to the district, including incoming kindergarten students, you can still do so through the Family Welcome Center at 25 Cole Avenue. When you arrive, call (508) 764-5414 ext. 405 and provide your name and phone number. You will be directed to wait in your car until you receive a call to come into the building. Only one parent or guardian should enter. Please wear a mask and use hand sanitizer upon entering. If you don't have a mask, one will be offered to you onsite. If you have children with you, a staff member will come to your car with the paperwork. For a full description of our enrollment process and the required documentation, please see [our website](#).

Communication During the School Year

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

We remain committed to providing students in Southbridge with rich opportunities for learning under any circumstance. Thank you for your patience and hard work during this unusual time and your collaboration in creating our reopening plan.

Regards,

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

