



Southbridge Public Schools

132 Torrey Road, Southbridge MA 01550

Telephone: (508) 764-5450

March 12, 2021

Dear Families,

We continue to see a decline in rates of COVID-19 in the community, with Southbridge no longer in the “red” category of the weekly data from the Department of Public Health for the second week in a row. You may have seen a recent announcement from the Commissioner of Education in regard to a return to in-person instruction. As a result of this announcement, The district is aiming to have all students who have selected in-person learning 5 days a week begin full in-person instruction prior to April 28, 2021.

Please note: students who are currently learning remotely full-time (grades K-12) can continue to do so until the end of the current school year. The district has created a survey asking families to confirm their choice of having their child participate in school 5 days a week in-person or having them participate in school remotely 5 days a week until the end of this school year. You can access this survey [in English here](#) and [in Spanish here](#). Both surveys are also available on the homepage of our website and will be sent to families by email. It is very important that you complete this survey so that we can continue to support your student’s academic success.

Elementary students are already attending school full-time five days a week and are not impacted by this transition. We anticipate there will be no changes to our current policies of mask-wearing, social distancing, hand washing, contact-tracing, etc. in our elementary schools.

The district will eliminate the hybrid model of instruction in grades 6-12 on or before the April 28, 2021 mandate. This change will likely require the district to shift to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regulation of maintaining three feet of social distancing rather than the six feet of distancing that the district has utilized to date. This change will also impact the spacing of seating on school buses.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has studied the issue of three feet social distancing versus six feet of social distancing extensively and the new policy will not allow districts to request a waiver from opening schools in-person with three feet of social distancing. I believe that the availability of the vaccine for our most vulnerable populations including staff members and the timing of this transition in late April will result in conditions that are potentially at an even higher level of safety than we are currently experiencing within our schools. However, families who remain uncomfortable with the changes in the district’s

safety protocols will continue to receive our support for students' continued participation in remote learning.

I hope you have a restful weekend. As always, you can send any questions you have to help@southbridgepublic.org or ayuda@southbridgepublic.org.

Regards,

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

