

Revised 8/5/2020

Reopening the Ranger Way

A Plan for Welcoming Students Back to the Methuen Public
Schools for the 2020-21 School Year

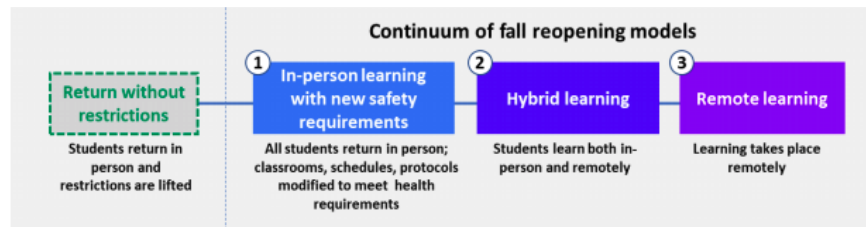


Letter from Superintendent Kwong

July 30, 2020

Dear Methuen School Community,

We are looking forward to opening school in the fall and seeing all of our students, staff and families again. We recognize that this fall opening will look and feel different, but our primary focus continues to be student and staff safety. On June 25, 2020, we received the *Initial Fall Reopening Guidance* from the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Jeff Riley. Our school teams began reviewing the document at that time and planning to meet the requirement that we develop the three models of return in the diagram below, taken from the guidance document. The three models are: a return to full in-person learning adhering to safety requirements in the document, a hybrid learning model where students are both in-person and learning remotely, and a full remote learning plan.



Since early June, we have conducted stakeholder surveys, facilitated a focused planning week with staff, solicited feedback on initial plans from school councils, organized a social emotional learning and mental health committee, communicated with families, met as a leadership team to continue planning, and incorporated additional guidance as it was received from DESE. The creation of this draft of the Methuen Public Schools Reopening Plan was a culmination of guidance from DESE, focused, collegial work by staff, and feedback from many.

Throughout our work, safety of all students and staff has remained the top priority. In addition, we had thoughtful discussions around the social emotional wellbeing of students and staff, equity of services and support for all students, and maintaining a focus on teaching and learning to move our students forward. This work has been undoubtedly challenging, but our team is committed and dedicated to providing our students and families with a high quality education no matter the model of teaching.

We will continue fine tuning our plans through the next several weeks and communicating with staff and families. We deeply appreciate all your patience, involvement, and continued support as we navigate this new school year together.

Sincerely,
Brandi Kwong, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Acknowledgements

The following groups contributed to the development of this plan. Thank you to all the staff and families who filled out surveys, sent emails, and participated in virtual meetings, all of which were critical to the discussions and the planning process.

Fall Reopening Implementation Team

Executive Leadership Team; Bob Kfoury, Dir of Community Progs; MaryEllen Lucas, CGS Lower AP; Jim Carson, CGS Grade 5; Allison Sullivan, CGS Special Ed; Suzanne Lameroux, DPT Lower AP, Lisa Durkee, DPT Upper AP, Danielle Abdallah, DPT SEA; Terri Zappala, DPT Grade 5; Kathy Stacy, DPT Grade 6; Deb Mousley, DPT Guidance; Colleen Muller, DPT Grade 2, Stephanie Letourneau, DPT Grade 3, Cyndie Bennett, Marsh Lower AP, Rob Marino, Marsh Upper AP, Ann Barbagallo, Marsh Grade 7, Kathy Kelly, Marsh Art, Amanda Goyette, TNY Lower AP, Paula Simone, TNY Upper AP, Soula Bousios, TNY SEA, Lisa Feole, TNY K and MTA Vice President, Stephanie Boudreau, TNY PE, Mary DeSimone, LAD K-8 Supervisor, Sheila Hornby, MHS AP, Kristen Thomas, MHS AP, Kevin O'Loughlin, MHS AP, Kwesi Moody, MHS AP, Jon Becker, MHS History and MTA President, Marybeth Fleming, MHS Math, Bill James, MHS PE, David LaCroix, K-8 Beh Sup Admin, Vicki Brown, PK SEA, Matt Curran, Athletic Director, Lisa Golobski-Twomey, English DH, Chelsea Keating, MSH SEA

School Councils

CGS School Council: Katie Proietti, Principal, Liz Dunn, Teacher; Erica Reiner, Teacher; Allyson Scott, Teacher; Michelle Sterner, Teacher; Julie Campo, Parent, Wanda DeJesus, Parent, Lindsay Goldstein, Parent, Jade Kucharski, Parent, Brent Rapisardi, Parent, Kristen Solemina, Parent; **Marsh School Council:** Rebecca Gordon, Principal, Sharon LaPlante, Teacher, Kimberlee Nutter, Teacher, Brenda Robert, Teacher, Jennie Casey, Parent, Gratia Gosselin, Parent, Gina Ruffini, Parent, Nicole VanPraet, Parent; **Tenney School Council:** Mary Beth Donovan, Principal; Ashley Chester, Teacher; Rebecca Devendorf, Teacher; Judy Flagg, Teacher; Sarah Norman, Teacher; Brad Gosselin, Parent; Julie Matthews, Parent; Elecia Miller, Parent; Judy Mullins, Parent; Eleni Varitimos, Parent; **Timony School Council:** Christopher Reeve, Principal; Sonya Dugan, Teacher; Colleen Muller, Teacher; Stacie O'Leary, Teacher; Jill Ramey, Teacher; Kate Vachon, Teacher; Jessica Bailey, Parent; Cheryl Corrigan, Parent; Cherilyn Donaghey, Parent; Sandra Ferarra, Parent; Stephanie Guyotte, Parent; **MHS School Council:** Richard Barden, Principal; Jaclyn Burns, Teacher; Maryellen Fillipon, Teacher; Sarah Grant, Teacher; Jordan Hamilton, Teacher; Danielle Langevin, Teacher; Lisa Campbell, Parent; Paul Downing, Parent; Laurie Keegan, Parent; James (J.J.) McPhee, Parent; Christine Sacchetti, Parent; Laura Labreau, Student; Adam McCraw, Student; Gayla Bartlett, Community; **ELPAC:** Fernando Colombo, Parent; Jenny Mar Sanchez, Parent; **SEPAC:** Carolyn Wilkinson, Parent

SEL/Mental Health/PBIS Committee

Stacey Zraket, Kirk Taveras, Christina Conlon, Deborah Mousley, Mary DeSimone, Roger Lenfest, Stephanie Turmel, Vanessa Chausse, Simon McCaffery, Danielle Dillman, Christine Dumont, Elizabeth Fulks, Jeff Osgood, Devin Deveau, Dave Lacroix, Eric Saum, Jeffrey Bellistri, Johanna Fawcett, Melissa Romanowsky, Molly Ragucci, Laura DePlacido, Kelly Geraghty, Katie Proietti, Janette Diaz, Danielle Abdallah, Stephanie Williams, Dean Brouder, Martha Tatro, Dana Gastich, Amy Foley, Alison Sumski, Erica Reiner, Jessica Lowe, Julie O'Neil, Jaclyn Tramonte, Brooke Jackson, John Crocker

Executive Leadership Team

Brandi Kwong, Superintendent; Ron Noble, Assistant Superintendent; Ed Lussier, Director of Tech and Operations, Ian Gosselin, Business Manager, Colleen McCarthy, Director of HR, Bob Frati, Director of Nutrition Services, Patti Comeau, MPS Nurse Leader, Dana Gastich, Director of LAD, Gina Bozek, Director of Student Services, Katie Proietti, CGS Supervising Principal; Chris Reeve, DPT Supervising Principal, Rebecca Gordon, Marsh Supervising Principal, Mary Beth Donovan, TNY Supervising Principal, Richard Barden, MHS Supervising Principal, John Crocker, Dir. of School Mental Health & Beh. Services

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Reopening Scenarios

School districts across the Commonwealth and nation are facing unprecedented uncertainty looking ahead to the start of the 2020-21 school year. Here in Methuen, we created a plan for all possible scenarios, recognizing that how we begin the school year may look quite different from how we progress through it. We want our students safe, we want them learning, and we want them engaged in their school communities, no matter how they are accessing school during the pandemic. This plan was designed to support students, staff, and families to toggle as seamlessly as possible between in-person learning, remote learning, and a hybrid model as public health conditions dictate.

Learning Scenarios ¹		
Scenario 1: Return to Full-Time In-Person Learning	Scenario 2: Continuation of Full-Time Remote Learning	Scenario 3: Hybrid Learning
<p><i>What is it?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of students and staff attend school in-person. • Students and staff wear masks, engage in frequent handwashing, and remain physically distanced throughout the day • Some students and staff participate in remote learning. 	<p><i>What is it?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of students participate in remote learning. • As public health conditions permit, some groups of students attend school in-person. • Staff may work remotely or in school buildings, as space permits. 	<p><i>What is it?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support physical distancing in school buildings, students are assigned a consistent schedule balancing in-person and remote learning.
<p><i>What are the key considerations for planning?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a welcoming, safe, and supportive community for students and staff. • Understanding students' learning needs after a period of school building closure. • Aligning instructional materials and teacher professional development to meet students' needs. 	<p><i>What are the key considerations for planning?</i></p> <p>EVERYTHING IN SCENARIO 1 PLUS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building relationships with students and families remotely. • Maintaining instructional coherence. • Establishing an appropriate role for technology. • Meeting the needs of our most vulnerable students. • Building teachers' capacity to effectively deliver instruction remotely. 	<p><i>What are the key considerations for planning?</i></p> <p>EVERYTHING IN SCENARIOS 1 AND 2 PLUS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining curricular coherence between in-person and remote learning. • Prioritizing our most vulnerable students in scheduling. • Supporting staff and families to monitor and track students' participation.

¹ Adapted from the Council of Chief State School Officers' guide *Restart & Recovery: Considerations for Teaching & Learning*.

Reopening Guidelines and Principles

The health, safety, and well-being of every MPS student and staff member is the highest priority for reopening schools. The MPS Reopening Implementation Team ensured that all planning was done in accordance with the latest guidelines from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). We also carefully reviewed all feedback received from families and staff members (e.g., survey responses, emails, virtual meetings, conversations) to understand our community's needs and concerns related to safely reopening our schools. With this information in mind, MPS developed core beliefs to inform our reopening plan.

DESE Reopening Guidelines and Considerations

DESE Commissioner Jeffrey Riley issued initial fall school reopening guidance on June 25, 2020. This guidance established a statewide goal to “safely bring back as many students as possible to in-person school settings, to maximize learning and address our students’ holistic needs.” The guidance also laid out health and safety requirements all schools must follow. Highlights include:

Mask wearing

- Students in **grade 2 and above are required to wear a mask/face covering** that covers their nose and mouth in school and on school buses. However, **MPS will require students at all grade levels to wear masks**. Younger students will be provided additional mask breaks.
- **Families should provide masks/face coverings** for their children to wear in school. Schools will have extra disposable masks/face coverings for students who need them.
- **Educators and staff are required to wear masks/face coverings.**
- **Mask breaks should occur throughout the day.** Breaks should occur when students can be six feet apart and outside or in a room with the windows open.
- **Exceptions to mask/face covering requirements will be made** for those who cannot wear masks/face coverings due to a medical condition or disability.

Physical distancing

- Individuals must maintain a **minimum of 3 feet of physical distance** while in school, including in classrooms. 6 feet of physical distance is recommended and **MPS will account for 6 feet of distance whenever possible.**
- **Desks should be arranged in rows** facing the same direction, spaced a **minimum of three feet apart.**
- Cafeterias, media centers, and other **alternative spaces may be repurposed as classrooms** to accommodate distancing requirements.

Student grouping

- There is **no maximum class size** so long as distancing requirements are met.
- Students should be divided into groups and **remain in their groups throughout the day** to reduce inter-group contact to the extent feasible.
- **High needs students should be prioritized for full-time in-person learning.**

Screening for COVID-19

- Temperature checks are not recommended.
- In-school testing for COVID-19 is not recommended.
- Families should conduct a **symptom check** and not send their children to school if they exhibit any COVID-19 symptoms.
- Schools should work with families to ensure **students are current on all standard vaccinations**. The flu vaccine is strongly recommended for all students and staff.

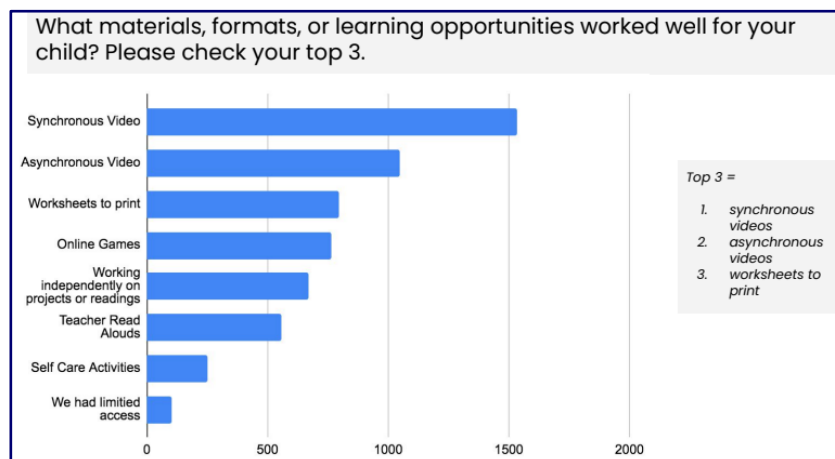
Handwashing and hand sanitizing

- Students and staff are required to exercise hand hygiene (hand washing or sanitizing) **throughout the day**, including upon arrival to school, before eating, before putting on and taking off masks, and before dismissal.
- When handwashing, Individuals should **use soap and water to wash all surfaces of their hands for at least 20 seconds**.
- Hand sanitizer with **at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropanol can be used** when hand washing is not feasible. Hand sanitizer should be applied to all surfaces of the hands and in sufficient quantity that it takes 20 seconds of rubbing hands together for the sanitizer to dry.
- Hand sanitizer should be placed at **key locations** throughout the school building.

Methuen Community Feedback

Feedback from families and staff members was a main driver in the development of this reopening plan. MPS surveyed both groups the first week of June and then again in July.

The first survey informed our understanding of what worked well with remote learning in the spring and what needs to change if remote learning remains a considerable piece of the plan for 2020-21. It was clear that parents and staff desired a more structured schedule that could closely mirror a scheduled school day. We also used this initial survey to guide our work related to planning for a reopening that accounts for social emotional learning, student mental health, and trauma informed practices.

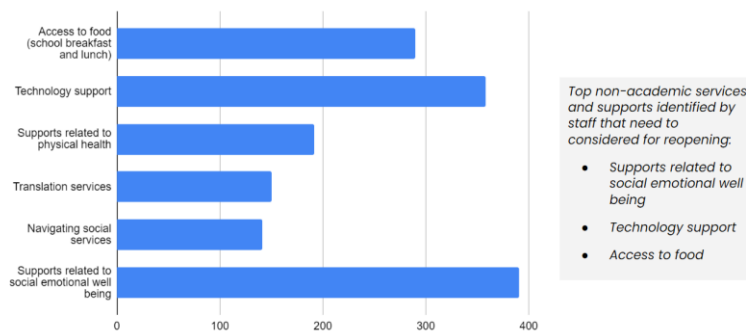


While engaging in remote learning, what are your specific concerns about your child's social or emotional well-being?

Major Themes from the Narrative Responses (PK-12)

- Significant feelings of anxiety, fear, and depression
- Overwhelming concern related to lack of social interaction, students missing school/friends, and isolation
- Concerns related to lack of engagement in remote learning
- Desire for more synchronous activities
- Some indication of concern related to increased screen time
- Some expression of feeling overwhelmed by remote learning

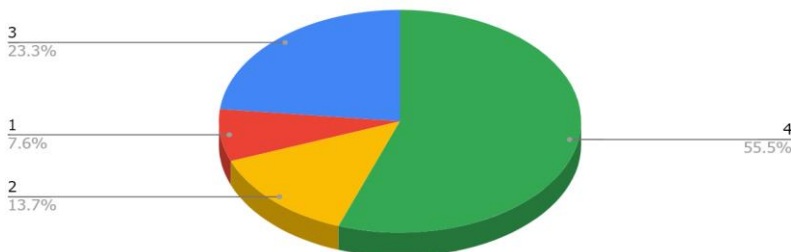
What are the non-academic services and supports that you feel will be the most important to your students as the district considers reopening options in the fall?

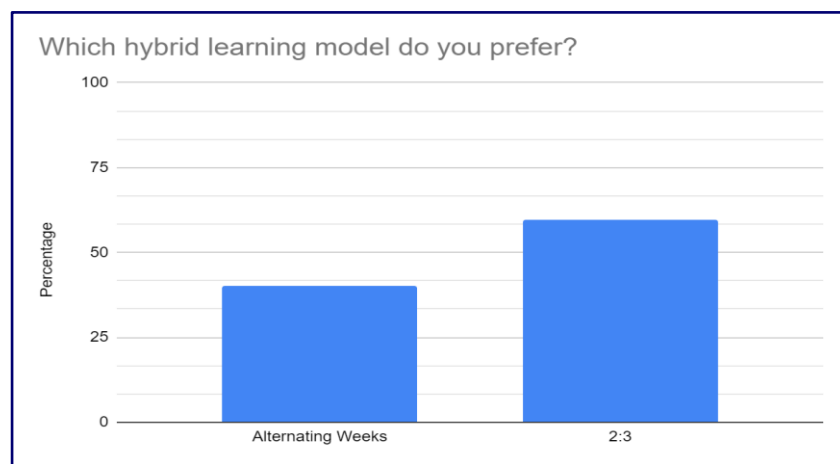
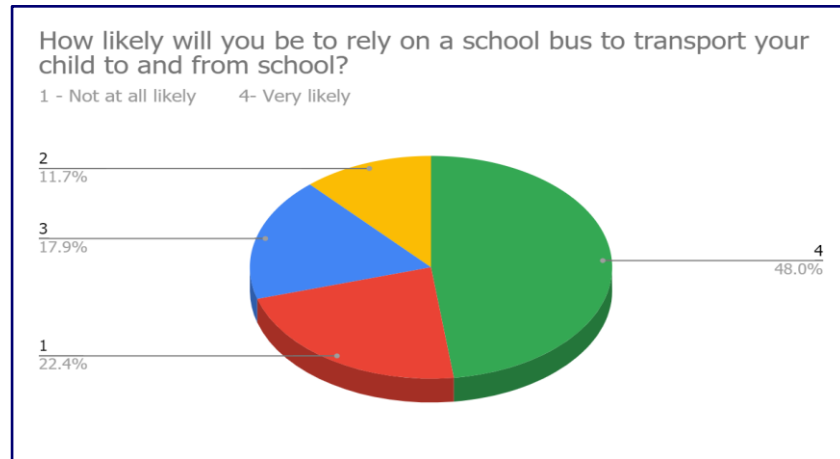


The second survey, issued in July, provided an opportunity to ask more targeted questions about some of the ideas for reopening generated by the Reopening Implementation Team, as well as establish an initial understanding of family- and staff-readiness to return to in-person learning.

How likely are you to send your children if schools reopen for in-person learning in the fall?

1 - Not at all likely 4- Very likely





MPS Reopening Core Beliefs

In light of the guidelines from DESE and feedback from our community, MPS developed our reopening plan with the following core beliefs in mind:

1. The health and safety of MPS students and staff is paramount.
2. Providing an equitable education for all students means prioritizing in-person learning for our most vulnerable students.
3. MPS families rely on their schools for much more than teaching and learning.
4. Consistent expectations and learning experiences are especially important in a year full of uncertainty.
5. While public health restrictions are in place, MPS educators must and will redefine “best practices” for meeting students’ academic, social, and emotional needs.
6. Student success is predicated on the adults around them working together.
7. No matter what learning model MPS has in place at a given time, we will provide a high quality education.

MPS Planning Process and Timeline

Our planning process began in early June as we gathered information from families and staff regarding their experiences with remote learning in the spring, concerns about social emotional wellbeing, and initial thoughts about returning to schools in the fall. Below is the timeline of planning events and communications, stakeholders involved, and level of engagement/outreach for each event. The August timeline may change due to emerging guidelines from the Commissioner or Governor based on the current status of the pandemic.

Date	Action	Purpose
June 5, 2020	Sent feedback survey to staff and families	To solicit feedback on experiences with and opinions about the spring school closure, remote learning, and initial thoughts on return to school
June 25, 2020	DESE releases Initial Fall Reopening Guidance; MPS sends to staff.	To ensure staff had access to the latest reopening guidelines.
June 26, 2020	Sent letter to families with DESE Initial Fall Reopening Guidance enclosed	To ensure families had access to the latest reopening guidelines.
July 7-10, 2020	Launch the Reopening Implementation Team, a team of 50 teachers and administrators from across the district	To synthesize family and staff survey results and reopening guidelines to create early models for a full in-person, hybrid, and full remote learning
July 13, 2020	Updated the School Committee on reopening planning	To provide an overview of planning to date and seek feedback
July 15, 2020	Held a district wide School Council meeting	To provide all five school councils, consisting of parents and staff, to discuss in detail planning progress and support needed
July 15, 2020	Sent a second feedback survey to families	To determine likelihood of families sending students to school in-person and ride a bus, understand family capacity to support remote learning in the home, and collect feedback on two potential hybrid learning models
Week of July 13, 2020	Teachers union sent a survey to members.	To understand feelings of teachers, program assistants, and secretaries about returning to in-person work in schools

July 20, 2020	HR sent a survey to staff	To determine whether or not staff fall into any of the categories that may not allow for return to work in-person
July 22, 2020	Convened a full leadership team planning day	To review results from most recent surveys and latest guidance from DESE to continue refining the hybrid and remote models
July 24, 2020	Held a second district wide School Council meeting	To collect feedback on preferred hybrid learning structures and discussions about a phased in approach
July 28, 2020	Released Initial School Opening Plan	To share the initial plan with the entire school community - School Committee, staff, and families
July 30, 2020	Will present the draft plan to the School Committee and greater public at 6:30pm.	To provide the School Committee with the Superintendent's draft plan for reopening schools.
July 31, 2020	Required to submit preliminary reopening plan to DESE	To submit preliminary reopening plan, as discussed with the School Committee to DESE
July 31, 2020	Will facilitate a Zoom meeting for staff and a YouTube Live session with families to review the reopening plan	All MPS staff invited to join virtual meeting at 10:00am and all families at noon
By August 10, 2020	Will seek School Committee approval for selection of reopening model	To attain School Committee approval and decision for reopening model
August 10, 2020	Will submit final reopening plan to DESE	To comply with DESE's submission requirements.
By August 14th, 2020	Will request all families complete a binding enrollment form indicating students enrollment in MPS's approved reopening model or opt for a fully remote learning option	To confirm enrollment numbers to determine student and teacher class assignments.
By August 14th, 2020	Will acquire binding return notification from staff	To confirm staff for the 20-21 school year
August 14 - August 21, 2020	Will assign staff and student schedules	To confirm student and staff schedules for 2020-21.

Feasibility Study for a Full Return to In-Person Learning

Pursuant to DESE's reopening guidelines, MPS conducted a feasibility study for a full return to in-person learning. The Reopening Implementation Team completed inventories of each school building looking at available supplies, furniture, sinks, bathrooms, and classroom space (including alternative spaces such as gymnasiums, media centers, and schoolyards). The Team identified one-way traveling routes in each building for students and staff to safely enter, move through, and leave in cohorts. Arrival and dismissal procedures were established for each building that considered each school's unique layout and would allow appropriate physical distancing of students at these normally crowded times. The team tested various classroom configurations in each school to determine how many students can safely sit in each room with physical distancing requirements in place. School principals interrogated school schedules and staffing levels with an eye toward the feasibility of reducing class sizes and minimizing the number of transitions students must make during the day.

The conclusion reached by the MPS Leadership Team is that **a return to full-time in-person learning is not feasible for the district at this time**. The reasons why fall into three categories: (1) safety of MPS students and staff, (2) academic, social, and emotional wellbeing of MPS students, and (3) financial implications for the city of Methuen.

Safety of MPS Students and Staff

The safety of MPS students and staff is paramount. The MPS Leadership Team is working every day to prepare our school buildings for a safe return to in-person learning. However, as the public health community continues to learn about COVID-19 and DESE updates and expands its requirements for reopening schools accordingly, we must pivot to meet new demands and logistical challenges. This shifting landscape is not conducive to carefully planning to welcome all students and staff back into school buildings. Doing so would be akin to the state reopening the economy as swiftly as it closed it back in March.

Of particular challenge in our grammar schools is the sheer size of each. While we can adhere to physical distance requirements (minimum 3 feet) for desks and chairs in most classrooms, the number of students within the building sharing bathrooms, arriving and departing, moving in hallways, and moving within classrooms creates significant safety challenges and higher risk situations. Many of the solutions to these challenges led to less in-person instruction, more complicated scheduling for parents and staff, and more potential contact with others throughout the day, which we were focused on mitigating.

Our students and staff deserve a careful, gradual reopening that will allow us to test and refine health and safety protocols, and respond to the latest guidance and requirements before schools are reopened fully.

Academic, Social, and Emotional Wellbeing of MPS Students

Students, families, and staff are understandably anxious about returning to in-person learning. The guidelines and restrictions in place to preserve public health create conditions for learning that no one has experience navigating. That anxiety, coupled with the tragic loss of family members and friends at the hands of COVID-19, has created an imperative for MPS to assess our students' mental health and provide support and services before we ask them to return to in-person learning on a full-time basis.

Similarly, the abrupt move from in-person learning to full-time remote learning in the spring led to an unfortunate slowdown of learning, the magnitude of which we do not yet fully understand. One certainty is the disproportionate negative impact school building closures had on our most vulnerable students. Screening for and providing intense intervention to address that learning loss is a vital prerequisite to resuming full-time in-person learning.

Financial Implications

MPS students and staff are fortunate to have access to large, well-equipped school buildings. In many communities, the physical space does not exist in school buildings to bring all students back full-time while adhering to distance requirements. In Methuen, many classrooms are able to fit the number of student desks and chairs, appropriately physically spaced, needed to more or less maintain class sizes at pre-pandemic levels. However, despite the advantages that our physical plants bear, the financial consequences of stringent public health requirements remain insurmountable for us.

While many of our classrooms are large enough to provide students with at least 3 feet of physical distance, some are not. MPS would need to staff and outfit an additional 15-20 classrooms in a full return to in-person learning scenario. That translates to hiring 15-20 new educators and purchasing and estimated 540 new desks and chairs, plus other furniture to set up a full classroom experience. We would also have to purchase technology for each new classroom space and perform other structural modifications to make spaces conducive for teaching and learning.

Many existing classrooms are designed to support cooperative learning and have furniture such as tables for multiple students, rather than individual desks. Furniture not conducive to physically separating students would need to be removed from classrooms and stored and new furniture such as desks and chairs would need to be purchased.

In addition to classroom staff and furniture, a return to full in-person learning with the current public health requirements in place would bring significant new costs associated with transportation (e.g., reduced bus capacity for physical distancing would lead to double-runs or additional buses), handwashing (e.g., purchasing portable sink facilities for classrooms not outfitted with permanent sinks), and support staff to aid in safe arrival, dismissal, and hallway transition procedures.

In sum, a return to full in-person learning for MPS would immediately cost the city at least an additional \$2.1 million, broken down as follows:

- Teaching staff: 15-20 minimum in district estimated \$1,100,000
- Support staff: 15-20 per building estimated \$400,000
- Classroom furniture needed: \$150,000
- PPE safety supplies for full return: estimated \$500,000
- Transportation: costing of double/triple runs to be negotiated

In light of the challenges related to student and staff safety and finances, and in the interest of the wellbeing of students, an immediate full return to in-person learning is not feasible.

Instead, should the school committee opt for a return to in-person learning, the MPS Leadership Team is recommending a phased-in hybrid model, as described in the following section.

Recommendation for School Opening

If public health indicators hold and the school committee opts for a return to in-person learning, the MPS leadership team recommends a phased-in hybrid reopening plan for the 20-21 school year. Under this model:

- Staff will return to school buildings first to set up classrooms and participate in professional development designed to support them in navigating hybrid instruction.
- ~~Students will begin the year with full-time remote learning with the exception of our most vulnerable students who will be offered an opportunity to attend school in-person full time.~~
- On September 21, our most vulnerable students will be the first to transition from full-time remote learning to a hybrid schedule.
- Students in kindergarten through grade 4 and grade 9 will ~~be the first to transition from full-time remote learning to a then begin the~~ hybrid schedule ~~at the end of September on October 5.~~ These students will have time to acclimate to new buildings and new routines, while all other students continue to engage in remote learning.
- Students in all remaining grades will then begin on a hybrid schedule ~~in mid-on~~ October 26.
- MPS will reevaluate the plan in ~~midlate~~-November for potential changes.



A Phased-In Hybrid Model

Mirroring the phased-in reopening plan the Commonwealth is employing for state operations, the Methuen Public Schools will reopen one step at a time. Assuming public health indicators related to the COVID-19 pandemic continue to trend in a positive direction, MPS intends to reopen schools safely in four phases.

- Phase 1: Staff and System Readiness (plan approval - September 11)
- Phase 2: Student and Family Readiness (September 14 - October 9²³)
- Phase 3: Hybrid/Remote Learning (October 13²⁶ - November 6²⁵)
- Phase 4: Evaluation and Next Steps (November 9³⁰ - TBD)

Phase 1: Staff and System Readiness (plan approval - September 11)

What is it?

An opportunity to prepare staff and school buildings to welcome students back to rigorous standards-based instruction in a manner that adheres to all health and safety guidelines.

What does it mean for students and families?

The impact for families is a one-week delay of the opening of school for students, which would move from September 2 to September 14.

What does it mean for staff?

Phase 1 will allow MPS teachers and staff to fully prepare to welcome students into remote and in-person classrooms. DESE reopening guidelines were published after teachers and other school-year staff adjourned for the summer. While MPS staff have been terrific partners, with many volunteering their time to prepare for reopening, the district needs time when staff come back to provide teachers with professional development and training related to this reopening plan and the resulting new school policies and procedures. A week with teachers in school buildings prior to the start of school will provide the necessary time to ready physical and virtual classrooms, ensure every teacher has access to the tools they need, and calibrate on protocols and procedures for keeping students safe and learning.

Phase 2: Student and Family Readiness (September 14 - October 9²³)

What is it?

There are 5 main goals for Phase 2:

1. Ensure every MPS student understands the expectations for participation in remote and in-person learning for the 2020-21 school year.
2. Provide those students who will participate in in-person learning opportunities to meet their teachers and practice being in their schools before in-person classes commence.
3. Launch the remote learning program for all students.

4. Identify each MPS student's unique academic, social, and emotional learning needs, given the impact of the pandemic on top of the usual summer learning loss.
5. Gradually reintroduce students in each school building, starting with our most vulnerable students followed by our youngest learners.

What does it mean for students and families?

Monday, September 14 - Tuesday, September 15

- Students assigned to cohort A (see Phase 3 for a description of cohorts) will attend school on Monday, September 14.
- Students assigned to cohort B will attend school on Tuesday, September 15.
- ~~Special student populations who will attend school in-person full-time begin on September 14.~~
- Families will be invited to participate in virtual open houses to meet their children's teachers and learn about school policies and procedures for the school year.
- The focus of these two days is to ensure all students meet their new teachers, receive devices and materials necessary for remote learning. Students will also learn the new school policies and procedures and practice arrival, dismissal, and hallway transitions.

Wednesday, September 16 - Friday, September 18

- Remote learning will begin for all students on September ~~14~~16.
- Students will complete diagnostic assessments designed to support teachers to develop a learner profile, inclusive of academic, social, and emotional needs. Assessments will be delivered remotely.

Monday, September 21 - Friday, ~~September 25~~October 2

- Special student populations who will attend school in person begin on September 21.
- Remote learning will continue for all other students.

Monday, ~~September 28~~October 5 - Friday, October ~~9~~23

- Hybrid learning will begin for students in kindergarten through grade 4 and grade 9 students at the high school (see Phase 3 for a description of the proposed hybrid model).
- All other students will continue to participate in remote learning.

What does it mean for staff?

Monday, September 14 - Tuesday, September 15

- Grammar school staff assigned to cohort A (see Phase 3 for a description of cohorts) will have a day with their students on Monday, September 14.
- Grammar school staff assigned to cohort B will have a day with their students on Tuesday, September 15.

- High school staff teach across both cohorts, so will have a day with their cohort A students on Monday, September 14 and their cohort B students the following day.

Wednesday, September 16 - Friday, September 18

- Staff begin remote learning for all students on September ~~14~~16.
- Staff administer diagnostic assessments remotely.

Monday, September 21 - Friday, ~~September 25~~ October 2

- Staff responsible for teaching special student populations begin in-person teaching.
- All other ~~S~~staff will continue to provide remote learning.
- Staff will analyze data to identify each student's needs.

Monday, ~~September 28~~October 5 - Friday, October ~~9~~23

- Kindergarten through grade 4 staff will begin implementing the hybrid schedule.
- Grade 5 through grade 8 staff will continue to provide remote learning.
- High school staff will implement the hybrid schedule for grade 9 students, while all other students continue with remote learning.

Phase 3: Hybrid/Remote Learning (October ~~13-26~~ - November ~~6-25~~)

What is it?

Assuming public health indicators hold, MPS plans to launch a robust hybrid learning model district-wide in Phase 3. Students in kindergarten through grade 4 and grade 9 students will have been implementing the hybrid schedule the prior ~~two~~three weeks, yielding valuable insights to inform a district wide scale up.

Families may instead choose a full-time remote learning option. The Reopening Implementation Team put forward two potential hybrid models: alternating weeks and 2:3. We solicited feedback from MPS families on these options and the majority of families expressed a preference for the 2:3 model. The four grammar schools will utilize the 2:3 hybrid model and the high school will use a similar two-cohort model with a new block schedule.

Grammar Schools

2 Cohorts: The 2:3 hybrid model for the grammar schools starts by identifying two cohorts of students at each grade level in each school: cohort A and cohort B. Students in cohort A will attend school in-person on Mondays and Tuesday and engage in remote learning on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Students in cohort B will engage in remote learning on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays and attend school in person on Thursdays and Fridays. This schema ensures that school buildings never approach full capacity, allowing staff to spread students out throughout the day and easing the demand on hallways and common spaces (e.g., gymnasiums, cafeterias, media centers). It also reserves Wednesdays for deep cleaning between cohorts being in person. Using stable cohorts of students is consistent with DESE's reopening guidance to keep students

Cohorts will be created by assigning half the classes at each grade level to cohort A and the other half to cohort B. By dividing the grade level in half and keeping individual classes intact, we will create consistency for students and staff. Students will be with their primary teacher(s) and the same group of peers everyday, when they are attending school in-person and when they are remote. We will endeavor to assign siblings in the Methuen Public Schools to the same cohort to ease the burden on families.

Schedule: To make it simple for students, families, and staff, **a single schedule will be used at each grade level** as much as possible given service delivery requirements. The Reopening Implementation Team strongly recommended that remote learning days follow a schedule similar to that used for in-person days. MPS families overwhelmingly confirmed that their children will be able to fully participate in remote learning that follows a typical school day schedule. In all of the schedules, there will be time built in for multiple scheduled mask and hand washing breaks. All five building administration teams have identified multiple outdoor classroom spaces that can be used throughout each day of in-person instruction. Principals and teachers will work out those schedules as the new year begins.

Using the same schedule for in-person and remote learning days will help students establish productive learning routines and allow a seamless transition should public health indicators allow for a return to full-time in-person learning *or* require MPS to return to full-time remote learning. One aspect that cannot be determined for any level at this time is the definitive start and end time for each day as we may have to schedule staggered start and end times to account for additional pick up and drop off and how many students will need the bus.

Sample Lower School Schedule*

*Subject to change based on enrollment, staffing, and additional guidance

Cohort A				
<i>In-Person Learning</i>		<i>Remote Learning</i>		
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
ELA Intervention	ELA Intervention	ELA Intervention	ELA Intervention	ELA Intervention
ELA	ELA	ELA	ELA	ELA
Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies
Science	Science	Science	Science	Science

Lunch & Recess	Lunch & Recess	Lunch & Break	Lunch & Break	Lunch & Break
Math & Intervention	Math & Intervention	Math & Intervention	Math & Intervention	Math & Intervention
Specials	Specials	Specials	Specials	Specials

Cohort B				
Remote Learning			In-Person Learning	
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
ELA Intervention	ELA Intervention	ELA Intervention	ELA Intervention	ELA Intervention
ELA	ELA	ELA	ELA	ELA
Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies
Science	Science	Science	Science	Science
Lunch & Break	Lunch & Break	Lunch & Break	Lunch & Recess	Lunch & Recess
Math & Intervention	Math & Intervention	Math & Intervention	Math & Intervention	Math & Intervention
Specials	Specials	Specials	Specials	Specials

Sample Upper School Schedule*

*Subject to change based on enrollment, staffing, and additional guidance

Cohort A				
In-Person Learning		Remote Learning		
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom
ELA	ELA	ELA	ELA	ELA
Science	Science	Science	Science	Science
Specials	Specials	Specials	Specials	Specials
Lunch & Recess	Lunch & Recess	Lunch & Break	Lunch & Break	Lunch & Break
Math	Math	Math	Math	Math
Enrichment	Enrichment	Enrichment	Enrichment	Enrichment
Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies

Cohort B				
Remote Learning			In-Person Learning	
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom

ELA	ELA	ELA	ELA	ELA
Science	Science	Science	Science	Science
Specials	Specials	Specials	Specials	Specials
Lunch & Break	Lunch & Break	Lunch & Break	Lunch & Recess	Lunch & Recess
Math	Math	Math	Math	Math
Enrichment	Enrichment	Enrichment	Enrichment	Enrichment
Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies

High School

2 Cohorts: The hybrid model for the high school uses a new block schedule that builds off of the current seven period schedule. Like in the grammar schools, students will be divided into two cohorts. Due to the complexities resulting from the breadth of course offerings at the high school and the fact that many courses are open to students at multiple grade levels, cohorts will be identified alphabetically by student last name. This will aid us in ensuring that siblings are placed in the same cohort (though, we will do further analysis to place siblings with different last names in the same cohort as well). Like the grammar schools, the high school will use a two-week, repeating schedule weekly schedule as follows:

Week 1:

- Students in cohort A will attend school in-person on Mondays, ~~and~~ Tuesdays ~~and Wednesdays~~ and engage in remote learning on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays.
- Students in cohort B will engage in remote learning on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays and attend school in person on Thursdays and Fridays.

Week 2:

- ~~Students in cohort A will attend school in person on Mondays and Tuesdays and engage in remote learning on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays.~~

- ~~Students in cohort B will engage in remote learning on Mondays and Tuesdays and attend school in person on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays.~~

Like in the grammar schools, this schema ensures that the high school never approaches full capacity, allowing staff to spread students out throughout the day and easing the demand on hallways and common spaces (e.g., gymnasiums, cafeterias, media centers). ~~A unique priority for the high school is ensuring students have in-person classes with teachers more than once a week. The “all blocks meet” Wednesdays when cohorts will alternate being in person achieves this goal every other week. It also reserves Wednesdays for deep cleaning between cohorts being in person.~~

Schedule: The high school will use a new block schedule that accommodates seven courses and an advisory student support block. Mondays and Tuesdays create a two-day sequence that is repeated on Thursdays and Fridays, ensuring that both cohorts meet with all classes in-person every week. Wednesday is an “all blocks meet” day and ~~cohorts will alternate attending in person weekly~~ will be a remote day for all students. Like with the grammar schools, this schedule will allow students and staff to seamlessly transition to full-time remote learning as public health indicators require and may also be feasible for a return to full-time in person learning.

Sample high school schedule*

*Subject to change based on enrollment, staffing, and additional guidance.

Cohort A				
In-Person Learning		Remote Learning		
A Day	B Day	All Blocks Meet	A Day	B Day
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Period 1	Student Support	Period 1	Period 1	Student Support
		Period 2		
Period 2	Period 5	Period 3	Period 2	Period 5
		Period 4		
Period 3	Period 6	Period 5	Period 3	Period 6

Lunch/Advisory	Lunch/Advisory	Lunch/Advisory	Lunch/Advisory	Lunch/Advisory
Period 4	Period 7	Period 6 <hr/> Period 7	Period 4	Period 7

Cohort B				
Remote Learning			In-Person Learning	
A Day	B Day	All Blocks Meet	A Day	B Day
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Period 1	Student Support	Period 1 <hr/> Period 2	Period 1	Student Support
Period 2	Period 5	Period 3 <hr/> Period 4	Period 2	Period 5
Period 3	Period 6	Period 5	Period 3	Period 6
Lunch/Advisory	Lunch/Advisory	Lunch/Advisory	Lunch/Advisory	Lunch/Advisory
Period 4	Period 7	Period 6 <hr/> Period 7	Period 4	Period 7

What does it mean for students and families?

Grammar school students will have a consistent daily schedule that allows them to interact with the same group of peers and their teacher every day. When the class is in-person, students will be assigned seats in rows facing the same direction at least 3 feet apart from seat edge to seat edge. If classroom space is insufficient to allow for physical distancing, a second educator will support half the class in an adjacent classroom. When the class is remote, the teacher will also be remote. Students will use Google Classroom to engage live with their teacher throughout the day on remote learning days.

High school students will also have a consistent schedule, albeit one that is designed to be equitable across both cohorts of students over a 10-day period. The alternating in-person Wednesdays ensure that every other week every student has two in-person classes with every teacher. To ensure that students are able to access the courses they need and want to take, classes will be live streamed via Google Classroom so that the cohort of students participating remotely can participate with their peers attending in-person and with the teacher.

The student support blocks in the schedule ensure each cohort of students has a built-in opportunity to receive extra help from teachers, work with guidance counselors, and attend to post-secondary planning, reducing the need for students to spend extra time in the building.

What does it mean for staff?

Grammar school teachers will “follow” their students. In other words, when students are in-person their teachers will be too. When students are remote, their teachers will also be remote, though will likely be able to facilitate their remote lessons from their schools if they so choose. This is dependent upon the number of in-person students and whether or not we need a second room to spread students out for safety when they are in-person.

High school teachers will lead their lessons in person with roughly half of their students in-person and half participating remotely. Live streaming via Google Classroom will ensure remote students can follow along with the lesson. Longer blocks will allow teachers to “release” students to work on projects and other assignments, which will ensure students participating remotely are not tethered to their devices all day.

Phase 4: Evaluation and Next Steps (November 30 - TBD)

What is it?

In a year full of uncertainties, Phase 4 is that scheduled moment in time to reflect on how things are going and chart our next course. Students and staff will have been implementing the hybrid schedule for four weeks, some students six weeks. We will consult students, families, and staff. We will evaluate public health conditions, academic indicators, and promising practices from other school districts. Using all of this information, we will determine whether to continue with the hybrid schedule and for how long *or* consider an alternative, including a full return to in-person learning.

What does it mean for students and families?

Students and families will have an opportunity to share what is working and what has been challenging under the hybrid schedule. Families also have some assurance that, absent a significant change in public health indicators in our community, MPS will use the hybrid schedule at least through November 9, at which point we will provide sufficient lead-time for any changes to the schedule.

What does it mean for staff?

Similar to students and families, staff feedback on the hybrid schedule will be critical to determining how MPS proceeds during Phase 4.

Calendar of Phases

September 2020						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Phase 1: Teachers Only Day 1 of 7	2 Phase 1: Teachers Only Day 2 of 7	3 Phase 1: Teachers Only Day 3 of 7	4 	5
6	7 	8 Phase 1: Teachers Only Day 4 of 7	9 Phase 1: Teachers Only Day 5 of 7	10 Phase 1: Teachers Only Day 6 of 7	11 Phase 1: Teachers Only Day 7 of 7	12
13	14 All Schools Hybrid Cohort A In-Person (Cohort B- Off)	15 All Schools Hybrid Cohort B In-Person (Cohort A- Off)	16-18 Full Remote Learning- All Grades – All Students			19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	21-25 Full Remote Learning- All Grades (Special Populations In Person)					
27	28	29	30			
	28-30 Full Remote Learning- All Grades (Special Populations In Person)					

October 2020						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
				Full Remote Learning All Grades (Special Populations In Person)		
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	PK-4 Hybrid; Grades 5-8 Remote; Grade 9 Hybrid; Grades 10-12 Remote					
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	CLOSED	PK-4 Hybrid; Grades 5-8 Remote; Grade 9 Hybrid; Grades 10-12 Remote				
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	PK-4 Hybrid; Grades 5-8 Remote; Grade 9 Hybrid; Grades 10-12 Remote					
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
	All Grades, All Students Hybrid					

Remote Learning and the Remote Academy

The extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic have forced us all to rethink school delivery. The abrupt closing of all schools statewide several months ago exposed how woefully unprepared the nation's schools were to engage students in remote learning. While MPS staff and students still have much to learn about navigating a remote learning environment, we are in much better position to bring dynamic teaching and learning to a remote setting heading into this fall than we were in the spring.

Unequivocally, remote learning this fall will be more consistent, more rigorous, and more like school than what students and staff experienced March through June.

The Remote Academy in Methuen will be a full-time remote learning option for MPS families. Students in kindergarten through grade 8 will follow a daily schedule comparable to a traditional school schedule. MPS teachers who are unable to return to an in-person learning environment will be assigned to classes within the Remote Academy. In other words, students in the Academy will be on a MPS schedule learning from MPS teachers with MPS curricula.

For the Remote Academy in Methuen, all remote learning in the hybrid model, and remote learning that is necessary during a period of school closure, the following will apply (see the Teaching and Learning section below for more details):

- Google Classroom will be our learning management system (LMS) for all grades district wide. Google Classroom organizes content in one place for easy access and storage.
- Students in all grades will have a Methuen email account. For most grades, restrictions will be in place to limit users' ability to send email to or receive emails from outside our domain.
- Clever will be used as a single sign on
- Google Meet will be used for synchronous meetings/teaching ([G Suite Enterprise for Education](#))
- MPS will be completely 1:1 for student-issued devices in all grades: pre-kindergarten students will use iPads, students in kindergarten through grade 8 will use Chromebooks, and high school students will use iPads.
- Attendance will be taken
- Students will be assessed as they would if they were in school

Sample Grammar School Remote Academy Schedule*

*Subject to change based on enrollment, staffing, and additional guidance

Lower Elementary				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
ELA	ELA	ELA	ELA	ELA

Science	Science	Science	Science	Science
Specials	Specials	Specials	Specials	Specials
Lunch & Break	Lunch & Break	Lunch & Break	Lunch & Break	Lunch & Break
Math	Math	Math	Math	Math
Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies
Enrichment	Enrichment	Enrichment	Enrichment	Enrichment

The Academy will operate differently at the high school level. The hybrid schedule for the high school outlined above already relies on high school classes being live streamed for the cohort learning remotely on a given day to interact with their in-person teacher and peers. As a result, high school students on a full-time remote schedule will live stream all courses, essentially joining whichever cohort of students is remote each day. Some courses may not be available to high school students in the Academy due to the content/structure requiring some in-person learning time.

Eligibility for Remote Academy

Any MPS family can opt to enroll their student in the Remote Academy, especially students who share a household with individuals at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 or are at increased risk themselves. Families of students who receive special services should consult their schools prior to opting into the Remote Academy.

Ideally, Families that choose the Remote Academy will remain in the program for the full 2020-21 school year for the sake of instructional continuity and minimizing disruptions for all students. However, we understand family situations can change, as can the trajectory of the pandemic. Families that choose the Remote Academy or the hybrid schedule will have an opportunity to revisit their choice at the winter break scheduled for December. At that point, MPS will work with families who wish to change learning models, understanding that a change in model will likely mean a change in teachers and peer groups. MPS will revisit this policy if public health conditions change such that a return to full in-person learning becomes feasible.

Remote learning can only be successful if students have a quiet, dedicated place to work and that they are prepared to learn on time every time. We will provide a device and materials to every student and internet connectivity to those who need it, but will rely on families to ensure students are ready to learn (awake, dressed, and in a conducive space for learning) each day when the first period begins.

Our capacity to simultaneously run a hybrid schedule and a full-remote schedule (the Academy) is largely dependent on staff availability and student enrollment numbers. It will be critically important for all families to complete the binding enrollment form by August 14 so rosters and assignments can be assembled. Similarly, staff will need to work with Human Resources in early August to confirm whether they will return to in-person learning on the hybrid schedule or teach in the Academy.

Structure and Content

Families offered dueling concerns about remote learning in the spring. On the one hand, families requested more synchronous time with teachers. On the other hand, families expressed concerns about students spending too much time in front of screens. As a result of this feedback, the Remote Academy (and the remote learning days in the hybrid schedule) is designed to provide students with live lessons with their teachers in Google Meet at the start of each block. Teachers will set up the content for the day, as they do in-person, and then provide students with their daily tasks/assignments. When students then transition to working independently, they may log off of their devices to read, write, or build. Or, the class may split, with one group signing off to work on assignments while the teacher provides support to the other. Every teacher and every lesson is different, but the basic principle is that remote students will see their teacher and peers live in Google Meet at the beginning of each block and will have plenty of time away from their screens every day.

Like when students are in-person, **teachers will take attendance every period on every remote day.** Teachers will grade student work and **those grades will “count.”**

The Remote Academy will utilize the existing MPS curricula. For example, lower school students will use Eureka Math and Wonders for ELA, just as they would in an in-person learning scenario. This continuity of resources will ensure that when MPS is able to move to full in-person learning, the Academy students will not be disadvantaged.

Special Student Populations

We believe that providing an equitable education for all students means prioritizing in-person learning for our most vulnerable students. The Reopening Implementation Team carefully considered how to ensure students with disabilities, English learners (ELs), and at-risk students have as much access to in-person learning as possible. The MPS Student Services and Language Acquisition Departments have worked tirelessly this summer to plan for a seamless continuation of services and support for the students they serve regardless of learning model.

Students with Disabilities

On July 9, 2020, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education released a [memorandum](#) stating, “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 possible for students with disabilities, particularly preschool-aged students and those with significant and complex needs, while adhering to health and safety requirements. “Students must receive all services documented in their IEPs through in-person instruction, remote instruction, or a combination of both, with a strong emphasis on providing in-person instruction to the greatest extent possible, while abiding by the current necessary health and safety requirements.”

MPS will make every effort to continue in-person instruction to these students on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. If in-person instruction cannot be provided and students with disabilities must receive instruction remotely in full or in part, these students will “receive special education instruction and related services necessary to provide FAPE through an Instruction and Services model of delivery.” This includes structured lessons, teletherapy, video-based lessons, etc.

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-PL 3.” 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 use aided and augmentative communication;
- Students who are homeless;
- Students in foster care/congregate care; and/or
- Students dually identified as English learners.

There will be situations for some of our specialized populations when there is a need for staff and students to be closer than the minimum physical distancing requirements when delivering instruction and services. In these cases DESE “recommends that school and district special education service providers follow the guidelines that the Center for Disease and Control describe for ‘direct service providers’.” We recognize that individual students present unique challenges “that may make it less possible to practice physical distancing.” There will also be some students with disabilities that “will not be able to wear cloth face masks as frequently or at all.” We have begun conversations with relevant staff members and will work together to support such students safely.

Families will be an integral part of discussions in order “to provide input and fully understand how the school or district plans to provide special education services to their children in the new school year.” Special Education Administrators and liaisons will contact families as soon as possible to discuss how their student’s IEP services will be delivered if different than described in a student’s IEP, “giving particular consideration to potential changes to how and where special education services will be provided.” Written notification will be provided to families, using input from the discussion, containing specific information about IEP services that will be provided promptly at the start of the 2020-2021 school year.

IEPs/Evaluations

- When school resumes, Annual Review meetings that were delayed will be held to review the students’ IEPs.
- Initial/Re-evaluation testing that was delayed will be scheduled.
- Timelines for current IEPs and evaluations will be maintained.
- In-person evaluations will continue during the hybrid and remote situations as long as health and safety requirements allow.

IEP Team meetings

- In order to adhere to safety requirements, all IEP team meetings will be held remotely. This will minimize bringing visitors into school buildings and requiring staff to travel between schools. If this presents a hardship for families, the district will conduct meetings in a hybrid fashion where some members are present and others are remote for the meeting.
- All meetings will be held remotely if a school/district moves to a full remote learning model.

English Learners

It is a priority for MPS to ensure that every EL receives the services and support they need, regardless of the learning model the district or family chooses. The Language Acquisition Department continues to follow the [DESE Guidance on Identification, Assessment, Placement and Reclassification for English Learners](#) and has adapted practices to account for current safety protocols.

Identification of English Learners

English assessment of potential English learners continues at our English Learner Assessment Center, in the Central Administration Building. Increased health and safety protocols have been put in place including individualized testing, well-spaced appointments, use of PPE and frequent sanitization. For students who are unable to appear in person, we will offer remote screening options.

English Learner Education (ELE) Services

Across all learning scenarios, ELs can expect sheltered content instruction as well as English language development. Classroom modifications for English learners will be maintained in English learner plans and shared with all educators who serve those students.

MPS will prioritize in-person learning for groups of students who have been most impacted by the period of school building closure or are considered more vulnerable. English learners are considered part of this group and may be eligible to come to school Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday full-time. Specific plans for ~~a full-time in-person~~ this option will be shared directly with families of those students.

Language Assessment Teams

As outlined in the [DESE Guidance to Plan and Provide Remote Learning for English Learners](#), collaboration between core content and EL teachers will be supported across all learning scenarios. In order to facilitate this level of collaboration while remaining physically separate, we will utilize the ELlevation platform for asynchronous meetings. Language assessment teams, comprised of core content teachers, EL teachers, administrators, and other related service providers as necessary, will use this platform to share current data and assessment information and plan for successful instruction and engagement of ELs.

Communication and Family Engagement

We are committed to reaching families across all platforms and languages. As outlined in the [Massachusetts Blueprint for English Learner Success](#), effective family engagement is essential. We are committed to partnering with families of ELs and encourage their contributions to decision-making with respect to their children's education. We will provide opportunities to

hear the voices of our EL parent community (e.g., via ELPAC, parent outreach) and facilitate culturally-responsive learning opportunities for parents who would like to support their students' learning. We will continue to use bilingual parent liaisons and translations of written materials to reach all parents/families.

At-Risk Students

Diagnostic assessments administered during the first weeks of school will help teachers understand the learning loss experienced by students as a result of school building closures in the spring. Students who are multiple grade levels behind academically may be afforded the opportunity for increased in-person learning. We will evaluate staff and space capacity once student enrollment counts are firm and staff have confirmed whether or not they will be returning to in-person teaching.

Operations

Response to COVID-19 Scenarios

MPS will adhere to all health and safety requirements required by DESE, yet we acknowledge that despite our best efforts the risk of COVID-19 exposure and transmission in school and on buses will not be zero. DESE has released [detailed guidelines for schools responding to a range of scenarios involving a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19](#) in the school community. Rather than reprint those guidelines in full here, we have provided a summary below and encourage all members of the MPS community to review the document at the link above. All schools have identified a second nursing area for isolation purposes per the guidelines.

- Keeping our schools safe starts at the home of each and every MPS student and staff member. **If a student or staff member is experiencing any of the symptoms of COVID-19 below, they MUST stay home.**
 - Fever (100.4° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills
 - Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
 - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat
 - Headache when in combination with other symptoms
 - Muscle aches or body aches
 - Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
 - Fatigue, when in combination with other symptoms
 - Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) when in combination with other symptoms
- While specific protocols vary, there are some common elements for each possible COVID-19 scenario:
 - Evaluate symptoms
 - Separate from others
 - Clean and disinfect spaces visited by the person
 - Test for COVID-19 and stay at home while awaiting results
 - If test is positive:
 - Remain at home at least 10 days and until at least 3 days have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms
 - Monitor symptoms
 - Notify the school and personal close contacts
 - Answer the call from local board of health or Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative to help identify close contacts to help them prevent transmission
 - Secure release from contact tracers (local board of health or Community Tracing Collaborative) for return to school

Cleaning Protocols

Handwashing and hand sanitizing stations

Keeping hands clean is one of the most important factors in staying healthy and preventing the transmission of communicable diseases to others. MPS is drawing from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health's report, "[*Schools for Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools*](#)" published in June 2020. All staff and students will be expected to:

- Wash hands immediately before: leaving home, leaving the classroom, eating, touching shared objects, touching one's face, and leaving school
- Wash hands immediately after: arriving at school, entering classroom, finishing lunch, touching shared objects, using the bathroom, sneezing, and blowing one's nose, and arriving at home

Hand sanitizer dispensers will be in all classrooms and in common areas throughout buildings. In the grammar schools, most pre-kindergarten through grade 4 classrooms have sinks, soap dispensers, and paper towels. We expect to create handwashing stations in hallways and other locations where needed, especially in upper schools and at the high school.

School cleaning and disinfecting

Custodial staff will work to ensure that facilities are properly cleaned each day following DESE guidelines and recommendations from the *Schools for Health* report.

DESE guidance indicates the cleaning of desks can be done by students or custodial staff. For classroom use, spray bottles will be provided in all spaces and will be refilled nightly with appropriate disinfecting solutions. Custodial staff will also regularly utilize electrostatic disinfectant sprayers to sanitize classrooms and other common areas.

Cleaning Frequency	Examples
Daily	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Classroom surfaces● Surfaces in common areas
Multiple times per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Classroom desks, countertops and chairs● Door handles● Light switches● Handrails● Water Fountain● Restroom surfaces● Toilet seats● Elevator buttons● Countertops in offices● Outdoor play areas

Between Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toys, games, art supplies, instructional materials • Phones, printers, copy machines
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Daily Routines and Cleaning Logs

Routines and cleaning logs will be established to ensure that proper cleaning and disinfecting takes place in all buildings.

Air Quality

DESE guidance and the *Schools for Health* report contain similar recommendations related to heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. MPS has invested resources to complete the following preparations in each school building:

- HVAC system cleaning
- Repairing of existing HVAC equipment
- Upgrading air filters to increase efficiency and effectiveness
- Maximizing outdoor air circulation
- Reprogramming HVAC systems to operate additional hours per day

MPS has contracted with [FMC Technologies](#) to provide on-site system calibrations and software programming adjustments during the week of August 3. We are currently receiving proposals from contractors to perform baseline Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) surveys that will be conducted in accordance with the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHREA). The comprehensive surveys will be conducted in all spaces within all school buildings. A formal report per building will be prepared to present the methods used in conducting the surveys, test results for each space, and recommendations for corrective actions as needed. Specifically, the survey will focus on the following parameters: carbon dioxide (CO₂), carbon monoxide (CO), temperature, and relative humidity (RH).

Classroom Configuration

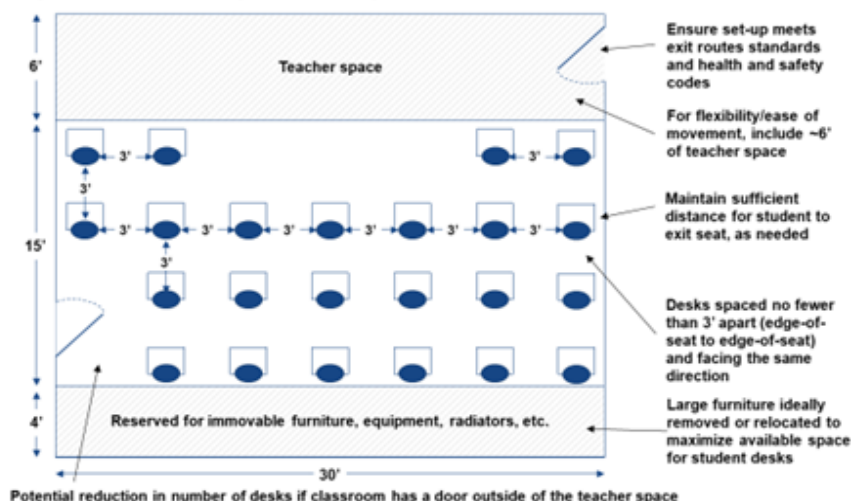
Classrooms will look different this fall as we set up learning spaces that adhere to physical distancing requirements. Desks will face the same direction and be arranged in rows. Children will be seated 6 feet apart whenever possible, but never less than 3 feet apart. Specifically, grammar school classrooms can accommodate 20 desks spaced 5 to 6 feet apart side-to-side and 3.5 to 5 feet front-to-back. High school classrooms can accommodate 20 desks spaced 6 feet apart in both directions. The front of the classroom will have at least 6 feet of teacher space. Hard to clean items, such as plush chairs and area rugs will be removed. To limit student-to-student sharing of materials, students will be provided their own materials to keep in individual containers in the classroom, whenever possible.

Books and other paper-based classroom resources will be stored in closets and cabinets whenever possible to simplify nightly cleaning efforts. [DESE's guidance on facilities and operations](#) states, "Books and other paper-based materials are not considered a high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning procedures." The guidance recommends that students clean their hands before and after using books.

The Reopening Implementation Team used classroom configurations created by DESE, such as the two examples below, to assess classroom space in all MPS school buildings.

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

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



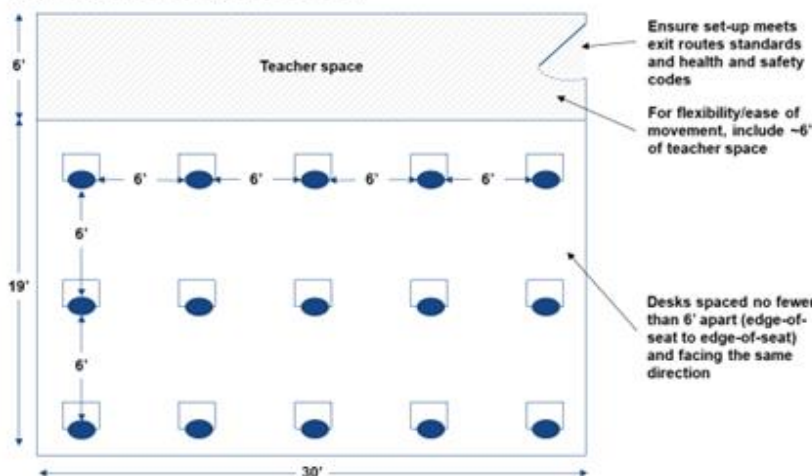
- Estimated 750 ft² capacity: ~23 students
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)¹

¹ Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

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

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



- Estimated 750 ft² 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)¹

¹ Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

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The pictures below are examples of classrooms from each grammar school.

CGS Upper School (6ft x 5ft)



CGS Lower School (6ft x 5ft)



Marsh Upper School (5ft x 4ft)



Marsh Lower School (5ft x 4ft)



Tenney Upper School (6ft x 5ft)



Tenney Lower School (6ft x 5ft)



Timony Upper School (5ft x 3.5ft)



Timony Lower School (5ft x 3.5ft)



Breakfast, Lunch, and Recess

Food is a basic necessity for students. MPS Nutrition Services ensures that every MPS student has daily access to healthy nutritious food while at school. Well-balanced meals are a prerequisite to learning.

The 2020-21 school year will require a different approach to school meals, while some students resume in-person attendance and others learn remotely. Of course, even those who are in-person will not have the level of access to the cafeteria to which they are accustomed. Our goal is to find new, innovative ways to continue to provide every student with meals that meet the National School Lunch Program's meal pattern requirements.

Meals for In-Person Learners

- Two menu options will be offered daily (hot and cold). Options will adhere to National School Lunch Program guidelines.
- Teachers can pre-order student meals one day ahead using an online ordering system. Meals for Monday would be ordered Friday.
- Families will also have access to the online ordering system to order meals for their students.
- Meals will be prepared and packaged in each school's kitchen.
- All special dietary requests will be prepared and labeled with the student's name and food allergen.
- All meals will be placed in insulated transport bags and labeled by classroom.
- Meal delivery to classrooms will be based on class schedules and utilizing designated routes through the buildings.
- Insulated bags will be transported to classrooms by food service staff using a platform truck, and dropped off with the teacher.
- Special attention to students with food allergies will be addressed during ordering and distribution of meals.
- Since eating meals will require students to remove their masks, classroom teachers will utilize adjacent empty classrooms or other designated spaces (e.g., hall ways, cafeterias) to provide sufficient space for students to remain at least 6 feet apart.

Meals for Remote Learners

- All schools will offer curbside meal pick-up that adheres to physical distancing requirements.
- Two menu options will be offered daily (hot and cold). Options will adhere to National School Lunch Program guidelines. Hot meals will include instructions for reheating. Cold meals will include food safety instructions.
- Families will have access to the online ordering system to order meals for their students.

- Student meals will be picked up at predetermined locations such as school bus loops, similar to the Summer Food Service Program.
- Meals will be documented using both the online ordering system and/or handheld tablets.
- MPS will evaluate the feasibility of food delivery to students' homes based on enrollment numbers for remote learning.

Recess

MPS believes lower- and upper-school students need to continue to have recess as part of their lunch blocks. This year, more than ever, students will need the “down” time to take off their masks and be outside (weather permitting). Principals are working with their teams to identify ways to cordon off sections of their school’s outdoor space to allow students to safely talk and play outside with classmates, while adhering to social distancing requirements.

Transportation

Transportation is one of the most challenging factors in the planning for reopening our schools. Thus, MPS is going to encourage as many families to drive, walk, or possibly bike to school this year. DESE transportation guidance was just released on July 23 and included the following recommendations:

- One student per seat (family members may sit together). A large bus will hold approximately 25 students at a time, 32 percent of full capacity.
- Designated seats for students to be filled from the back to the front as students are picked up.
- Strong recommendation to add monitors to busses to supervise and encourage students to follow the appropriate safety protocols.
- Bus to be emptied front to back.
- All students and adults on the bus must wear a mask (regardless of age).
- Busses are to be disinfected between runs and deep cleaned once a day.
- Families are encouraged to seek an alternative means of transportation.

For MPS, bussing schedules, routes, and availability are heavily dependent on the selected learning model and the number of families who absolutely require transportation for their children to attend school in-person. The simple reduction in bus capacity will limit MPS to transporting approximately one third the number of students in a typical year. Given budgetary constraints, we expect bussing practices to change in Methuen (i.e., we will not have the financial resources to pay for extensive double and triple runs to transport students at historic levels). Once we are able to firm up the number of students who need transportation, we will better understand the financial implications of implementing the new safety requirements. Many districts will be confronted with the necessity of reducing transportation offerings to just

those students who fall under state regulations: “All children in grades kindergarten through six who reside more than two miles from the school they are entitled to attend and the nearest school bus stop is more than one mile from their residence...”

We are working with our current transportation vendor to explore routing, appropriate cleaning protocols, supplies, personal protective equipment, and training.

Arrival, Dismissal, Hallway Transitions, and Visitors

Arrival and dismissal at each building will be planned and executed to maximize safety and efficiency when entering and exiting the building. For maximum safety, arrivals and dismissals may be staggered. More details regarding school schedules will be available in August. Our plans account for the least number of transitions possible each day. If students are transitioning from class to class at any point throughout the day, there will be clear travel paths with markers to promote sufficient physical distance.

Each building has a unique layout and unique bus loops. As a result, building-based teams are taking the lead in planning travel paths, transition times, and traffic flows that reduce the number of adults and students in any one place during these normally busy times.

DESE and public health guidance encourages schools not to allow visitors in and out of the buildings throughout the day to avoid the chance of additional contacts and contamination. Each building team will create a visitor protocol.

Community Programs - Ranger Club and 21st Century Program at MHS

Our Ranger Club program for students in kindergarten through grade 8 will consider plans based on the approved opening model. The goal of any additional childcare programming is to provide parents an option for keeping their child at the school in a structured, supervised environment after school hours. We cannot determine at this time what that will look like or even if it is possible, given the safety recommendations and protocols, but please know we are looking at all options and are fully aware of the value of this program for parents. The MHS 21st Century after school program will also be considering programming based on the approved opening model to support students in a safe manner.

MPS understands the hardship a hybrid schedule places on many Methuen families. We are exploring options to set up Remote Learning Centers in each grammar school to provide a supervised place for students in greatest need to go on their remote learning days (with the exception of Wednesdays).

Wearing of Masks/Face Coverings

All MPS students will be required to wear a mask or face covering that covers the nose and mouth while participating in school, at school-related activities, and on school property. Masks are required for all students: at school; school- sponsored activities; and on the bus during school bus transportation.

The draft language below will be added to the MPS Student Handbooks:

Student Health & Safety – Wearing of Masks/Face Coverings

Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic and the need to protect the health and safety of students and communities in the Commonwealth, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has mandated the wearing of masks/face coverings that cover both the nose and mouth for all students. In keeping with the requirements of state and local authorities and in the interest of the health and safety of all students and staff, all Methuen Public Schools students are required to wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth while participating in school, at school-related activities, and on school property. Masks are required for all students: at school; school-sponsored activities; and on the bus during school bus transportation.

Masks/face coverings should be provided by the student's family and washed daily. Please contact [School's COVID-19 point person/school nurse] for resources on obtaining face masks for students if it presents a financial burden. In the event that a student does not have a face mask, Methuen Public Schools has obtained a limited amount of disposable face masks for student use; a disposable face mask will be provided for the day.

For students who are unable to wear a mask due to medical conditions, disability impact, or other health and safety factors, exceptions to this policy will be considered. Students may be subject to daily temperature checks, may have desk shields added to their desks, and be seated more than 6ft away from others in the classroom. Please contact your child's [school nurse/Principal] immediately in the event that your child is unable to wear a mask/face covering for a covered reason so reasonable accommodations may be made, if appropriate.

If a family or a student refuses to supply a mask/face covering, encourage a student to remove their mask/face covering outside of mask breaks, or otherwise refuse to cooperate or discourage their student to cooperate with this policy, the Methuen Public Schools may contact the appropriate authorities, including but not limited to, the Department of Children and Families and/or the state and local Department of Public Health, and/or take other actions as appropriate to the circumstances. Those actions may include but not be limited to students reverting to the Remote Academy.

Teaching and Learning

Second only to student and staff safety, attaining our high standards for teaching and learning remain a priority. Our students deserve engaging, rigorous learning experiences and our staff deserve access to the high-quality instructional materials and professional development that help them unlock students' potential.

Educational Technology

MPS will be 1:1 at all grade levels, meaning that all students will be issued a device for use throughout the school day and at home. All devices will be labelled with the assigned student's name and ID and will also be assigned within our device management system. Students in pre-kindergarten will use iPads, students in kindergarten through grade 8 will use Chromebooks, and high school students will use iPads. Devices will travel between home and school daily.

All school owned devices are filtered by our Cisco Umbrella Content Filtering software, even outside of school. This content filter is compliant with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) as required by law and is regularly updated to prohibit access to inappropriate material.

All school owned devices are managed by MPS's Technology Team and will be deployed with wireless network settings already in place to ensure that they will seamlessly connect when students enter school buildings. We will provide families directions to help with connecting Chromebooks to home networks. Additional assistance and resources will be provided for families who do not have internet access at home.

The MPS Technology team will continue to provide support for staff and students. Prior to the start of school, we will share details about the process for students, families, and staff to request assistance with educational technology software and devices. Remote assistance will also be available for staff and students, if needed.

Learning Platforms

MPS will use Google Classroom as the learning management system (LMS) for all grade levels and we will continue to use Clever so students can access all of their digital resources in one place.

Additionally, for all grammar school Chromebooks, MPS has deployed GoGuardian software. This software provides teachers with a dashboard to monitor all student Chromebook activity during a class, launch specific resources on student screens, turn off student access as needed, whitelist or blacklist websites during class time, and help keep students on task. These tools will be available to teachers during both in-person class sessions as well as remote class sessions.

Google Meet will be utilized as the video conferencing solution for all grade levels, but the district has upgraded to the Google Enterprise Edition. Added features will provide teachers with tools to boost student engagement during remote lessons and facilitate more peer-to-peer discourse virtually.

Curriculum

Methuen Public Schools will utilize the same curriculum as the prior year in all subject areas for the 2020-21 school year in all grades pre-kindergarten through grade 12. Through grant funding, we may provide teachers and administrators time in August to revise our curriculum maps and pacing guides to reflect the needs of the students and standards that were not addressed due to school building closures in the spring. We also need to determine common diagnostic assessments to administer during the first few weeks of school. We will not be introducing any new texts or programs this coming school year.

Specialized Subjects

Fine arts and Physical education

Per the [most recent DESE guidelines](#) of July 25, 2020, DESE is strongly encouraging these courses and activities to be held fully or partially online if possible. If they are held in person, DESE strongly encourages – and at times requires – 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.***

For subjects like art and PE, there are additional guidelines about limiting the amount of sharing of equipment, increased safety precautions like handwashing, masks, and cleaning equipment

in between use. As our team just received these guidelines, we will be working to incorporate the arts and physical education safely into our models in the coming weeks, while adhering to all health and safety requirements. We value these specialists' subjects to ensure a well-rounded education for our students and will work to provide the best educational experiences we can at this time remotely and in-person when feasible and safe.

Upper School Advanced Math

MPS plans to continue to offer the advanced math course for eligible grade 6, 7 and 8 students. These courses will be conducted during the school day; therefore, in the hybrid schedule would be delivered via a combination of in-person and remote learning.

Grade 8 Spanish

MPS plans to continue to offer the grade 8 Spanish course. Due to the cohort model needed for the hybrid schedule, Spanish will be offered as a full remote course in 2020-21 with synchronous and asynchronous components occurring outside of school hours.

Professional Development

Teachers will need significant time at the onset of the school year to prepare for new safety requirements, new learning settings, remote learning tools, schedules, discussions about anti-racist curriculum, review of new pacing guides and assessments for September and topics focused on social emotional learning and trauma. MPS is proposing to have seven full days of professional development for staff on September 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10 and 11. At the time of this writing, DESE will waive the 180 required school days this year to 170 for this purpose. Our school calendar will need to be adjusted and approved by the School Committee in August to account for this change and other possible changes to professional development days and other half days.

We know our teachers need focused, quality professional development during this time. We have begun planning these days to account for staff safety and grade-level-span needs. We will have two grant funded instructional technology specialists to support our staff and families this year and provide professional development for staff and families. We also recognize that our families need support on how students will be learning remotely with devices and intend to provide family workshops during the month of September.

Mental Health Services and Supports and Social Emotional Learning

MPS formed the Mental Health/SEL & Safety Reopening Committee in early June to undertake the planning and resource development required to ensure services and supports offered across the district can continue to function in an in-person, remote, and hybrid learning environment. Committee members included teachers, administrators, school counselors, and Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) representing each school in the district who contributed specialized knowledge and expertise to the team. Committee members drew from their experience on district or school-based teams (e.g., PBIS implementation team, SEL curriculum team, mental health initiative committee, safe and supportive schools team).

Efforts are underway to (1) translate the systems of services and supports that exist while schools are in session to the remote learning context, (2) develop resources and supports for students, families, and staff to ensure the transition back to school accounts for psychological wellbeing regardless of the reopening model, and (3) develop and deliver professional development to support all staff in creating a safe and supportive school and community for all students.

Specific outcomes included in the action plan for the committee include:

- developing social emotional learning instructional practices to foster social emotional development and engagement in a remote context;
- translating trauma-sensitive practices to the remote context to ensure remote learning supports students who have been exposed to trauma related to COVID-19, and otherwise;
- developing health and SEL curricula to foster awareness of and skills to support physical and mental health, including immune system health;
- designing systems and practices to support expansion of mental health screening, including trauma screening, and conducting screening remotely;
- reviewing and revising telehealth and crisis management practices and procedures to build upon lessons learned during school closure;
- preparing materials and resources to support group and individual therapeutic services remotely;
- developing staff support systems, including peer groups to support secondary traumatic stress for educators;
- developing resources to direct families, students, and staff to community- and school-based supports and services to address social concerns or mental and physical health needs; and
- developing behavioral expectations and systems to explicitly reach and reinforce those expectations related to the remote learning setting and an in-person learning context with enhanced safety procedures and new rituals, routines, and requirements.

Each outcome outlined above has been designed to apply to the remote learning, hybrid, and in-person learning contexts. When necessary, new resources and procedures were developed to ensure services and supports will translate to any context. In this manner, students and families can expect continuity of services if the district shifts to a different learning model in response to public health indicators. Additionally, professional development related to all focus areas under the purview of the committee has been developed to support the preparation of all staff in supporting the social emotional wellbeing of students as they reenter schools.

All staff will be prepared to provide universal, preventative supports aimed at fostering social emotional competence and developing skills to manage stress, seek help effectively, and navigate one's social environment; specialized staff will have the resources and systems in place to provide group and individual mental health services, regardless of the learning context adopted by the district. Systems and practices designed to create a safe and supportive learning environment will be a priority for all staff, and this work will be supported through the provision of resources and professional development available at the outset of the year. Additionally, the professional development provided to staff will support identification of students and families who may require support services and a greater awareness of how to refer students and families to appropriate staff. Lastly, staff will gain a greater understanding of the support available to them, including how to seek consultation to effectively navigate crises and manage their own stress in order to be most effective in supporting the growth of students.

Appendix A: DESE Reopening Guidelines

The DESE publications referenced in this appendix contributed to the development of the MPS reopening plan. MPS expects additional guidance from DESE in the coming weeks and will continue to ensure the district adheres to guidelines and requirements.

- June 25, 2020: [Initial School Reopening Guidance](#). This guide set forth the initial set of health and safety requirements for districts. It is available at the link above in English, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Spanish, and Vietnamese.
- July 9, 2020: Comprehensive Special Education Guidance for the 2020-21 School Year ([download](#)). This guide set forth the requirements for educating students with disabilities during the pandemic.
- July 10, 2020: Fall Reopening Frequently Asked Questions as of July 10, 2020 ([download](#)).
- July 17, 2020: Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios in School, on the Bus, or in Community Settings ([download](#)). This guide describes what schools will do in response to a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19.
- July 22, 2020: Fall Reopening Transportation Guidance ([download](#)). This guide describes the health and safety protocols that must be followed on school buses and urges families to utilize alternative forms of transportation to and from school.
- July 22, 2020: Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations Guidance ([download](#)). This guide describes the required protocols related to cleaning, facilities management, and food service.
- July 24, 2020: Guidance for Courses Requiring Additional Safety Considerations for Fall 2020 ([download](#)). This guide provides parameters for offering courses in the arts and physical education.
- July 24, 2020: Remote Learning Guidance for Fall 2020 ([download](#)). This guide describes requirements for remote learning in the fall, which are very different from those established during the period of school building closures in the spring.