



Dartmouth Public Schools

Office of the Superintendent

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March 4, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

On February 23rd, Commissioner of Education, Jeffrey Riley released a statement relative to expanding in-person learning. It is the Commissioner's intention to obtain approval from the Board of Education to mandate that all elementary students return to school in a full-time capacity during the month of April. There is also discussion of a potential phase-in of middle and high school students at a later date. The Commissioner's initial correspondence indicates that this mandate will eliminate school districts' ability to implement a hybrid model of education. This is expected to be a component of a broader plan which will no longer allow district's to count remote and hybrid learning models for time on learning hours.

Prior to the release of this information the district had already been planning to return students to more in-person learning as has been the ultimate goal since the beginning of the school year. Students who are currently attending via a remote option (Elementary Virtual Academy, TECCA or Edgenuity) will remain in that model.

We have established the following schedule for students currently in the hybrid model to return to school 5 days a week.

- March 22 PK and K
- April 5 Grades 1, 3 and 5
- April 12 Grades 2 and 4

We will continue to abide by health and safety guidance and implement mitigation strategies that have proven successful throughout the year, including contact tracing protocols. However our classrooms will now be set up using DESE's recommended 3 feet of social distancing in order to be able to accommodate more students. Plans for lunch, snacks and mask breaks at 6 foot distancing are being developed at the building level. These will be communicated to families when complete.

We will be able to provide bus transportation in accordance with the updated DESE guidance which has eliminated capacity limits. That means distancing on the busses will be decreased. Students will be required to wear masks and remain seated. Sanitizer will still be available and windows will remain open to support increased ventilation.

We all recognize how challenging this year has been for everyone. I applaud our staff and faculty who have worked tirelessly to support our students this year. With the virus positivity rate trending downward, vaccines becoming available and the warmer weather approaching, we are know now is the right time to expand in person learning. It seems there is definitely light at the end of the tunnel.

Sincerely,

Bonny L. Gifford, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools