



School-Based Analysis of Returning to Full In-Person Learning

March 10, 2021

Overview

- Building-based teams were given the charge of identifying the challenges of eliminating the hybrid learning model and providing full in-person learning this spring.
 - Teams identified obstacles and discussed potential solutions.
 - This report outlines their findings and recommendations by grade-span.
 - Please note that all recommendations are subject to change to align with DESE guidance as required.
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DESE Guidance Updates



- **Elementary school phase (grades K-5):** For **elementary schools**, hybrid and remote learning models will no longer count towards meeting the required student learning time hours as of **Monday, April 5, 2021**. As a result, districts and schools are required to shift their learning model for **elementary school** grade levels to full-time, in-person instruction five days per week effective **Monday, April 5, 2021**.
- **Middle school phase (grades 6-8):** For **middle schools**, hybrid and remote learning models will no longer count towards meeting the required student learning time hours as of **Wednesday, April 28, 2021**. As a result, districts and schools will be required to shift their learning model for **middle school** grade levels to full-time, in-person instruction five days per week, effective **Wednesday, April 28, 2021**.
- **High school phase (grades 9-12):** We will announce the details and timing of the high school phase of the plan in April. Districts will be provided with at least two weeks in advance of the date for high school students to return to full-time, in-person instruction, but should start making such plans now.

DESE Guidance Updates



- **Definition of Full-time In-person Learning**

- The requirement for “full-time” in-person learning means that all structured learning time hours (on average 5 hours per day of structured learning time at the elementary level and 5.5 hours per day at the secondary level) are required to be delivered in-person, five days per week. This will generally mean that students are attending a full school day equivalent to the length of their school day pre-pandemic. Any deviation from offering full-time, in-person instruction five days a week to all students requires a waiver.
- Two exceptions:
 - Parents/guardians may choose to have their students learn remotely through the end of this school year, and the learning hours for these students will continue to count towards structured learning time.
 - Following DESE COVID-19 health protocols, individual students may need to isolate or quarantine and therefore learn remotely if they are symptomatic, diagnosed with COVID-19, or are a close contact of someone who tests positive. In these cases, where the district is following the DESE COVID-19 health protocols and students are learning remotely due to a COVID-19-related issue, learning hours will also continue to count towards structured learning time.

DESE Guidance Updates



- The regulations passed approved by DESE have the force of law and hybrid learning or remote learning no longer counts towards structured learning time.
- A School Committee vote is not necessary to adopt the changes because full-time, in-person learning is the default required model.
- Remote learning should be provided if parents/guardians opt out of in-person learning for the remainder of this school year only.
- The exception is if a district intends to submit any type of waiver request then a School Committee vote is necessary. Waivers are due on or before March 22, 2021.
- Non-essential visitors are still not allowed in buildings, however volunteers are now allowed in buildings to serve as monitors (lunch, recess, hallways, etc.) to support the transition to full in-person learning.

DESE Guidance Updates



Physical Distancing

- DESE summer guidance recommended 6 feet but no less than 3 feet distance between students.
- With the backing of 300+ MA physicians, the 3 feet distance is now widely embraced.
- Students must face the same direction and the three feet distance is measured as “seat edge to seat edge” and front to back and side to side. However, for short periods of time (e.g. 15-20 minutes several times per day), students may face each other for a “turn and talk” or other group activity. During these short periods, students should refrain from singing or engaging in activities that involve increased respiration.
- During meals and any other time students and adults are not wearing masks schools must adhere to **a strict six feet** of physical distance between individuals
- Teachers and staff should maintain six feet of distance from students and other staff when feasible. The exception is for short periods of time (e.g. helping students individually, walking between desks) when staff may be less than six feet away.

Eating in the Cafeteria

- Students must maintain 6 feet of distance when unmasked unless plexiglass barriers are used to separate students. Ensure that students do not mingle with other cohorts. The tables and other surfaces that students are using for meals should be cleaned between groups. Cleaning includes using an [approved EPA disinfectant](#) and then appropriately disposing of the materials used to wipe down the surfaces. Custodial staff or students may perform this surface cleaning, if appropriate.
- **Considerations for plexiglass barriers:**
 - Usage: Barriers may be used to increase cafeteria capacity during meals.
 - Height: Barriers should be tall enough to extend beyond a student’s standing height
 - Width: Barriers should extend at least one foot past the edge of the table and abide by fire and safety regulations
 - Cleaning: Barriers should be properly cleaned between uses
 - Rubber edges: Consider use of rubber edges to avoid risk of injury when plexiglass extends beyond tables

Implications for Full In-Person Learning (Not Exhaustive List)

- **Class Size**
 - Classrooms have been measured and hybrid (Cohort A/B) rosters checked to determine the distance between students if all hybrid students are in-person.
 - If there's less than 3-ft. between students in a given space, the class will be relocated to a larger space to ensure we are able to maintain between at least 3 ft. distancing.
 - We are exploring every option for space, particularly for our largest classes at the MS and HS. (Chorus and Band)
- **Building/Campus Navigation**
 - Arrival/dismissal need to increase supervision and possibly stagger schedules
 - Potential impact on traffic flow for drop-off/pick-up (consider police detail)
- **Scheduling**
 - Master schedule will need to be updated to reflect a 5 day week once fully in-person
 - Special education service schedules will likely be impacted and new schedules established
- **Hygiene and Cleaning**
 - Increased time for hand hygiene and scheduled bathroom breaks to monitor overcrowding in bathrooms
 - Increased time to clean desks and work areas given more students will be present
 - Increased need for cleaning supplies and PPE

Implications for Full In-Person Learning

- **Furniture**

- Tables, in some classes (Science Labs, Art rooms, Computer Labs, etc.) are not large enough to sit 2 students 3-ft. apart so we are looking at replacing them with individual desks or re-configuring them within the space if possible.

- **Staffing**

- We anticipate the possible need to hire additional staff to:
 - Cover leave of absence requests
 - Increase food service staffing to support increased lunch periods.
 - Staff new classroom sections if needed
 - Provide supervision at different times during the day if staff and/or volunteers are not available

- **Storage**

- We recognize the need to remove non-essential furniture to create space and therefore excess furniture will need to be stored either in our existing buildings (when possible) or we will need to rent storage pods.

Full-In-Person Learning when Unmasked



- **Lunch, Snack, and Mask Breaks**

- Doubling the number of students for lunch, breakfast/snack, and mask breaks poses a significant challenge. In order to maintain 6-ft. social distancing when unmasked, we are considering all potential options:
 - Adding additional eating spaces such as the gymnasium or adjacent rooms
 - Potentially requires the purchase of additional furniture
 - Requires additional staff or volunteers to supervise lunch periods
 - Tents and furniture outside are being considered but can't be relied on consistently because of inclement weather. An indoor space would need to serve as a back-up.
 - In some cases, students might be required to bring in a beach towel to sit on in the gymnasium and/or outside weather permitting. This may limit the need to purchase furniture or potentially serve as a temporary solution if there are time constraints acquiring furniture.
 - Cafeteria tables will likely need to be stored in most cases and some desks/chairs purchased
 - Food Services staffing will need to be increased

Overall Findings in Grades K-12



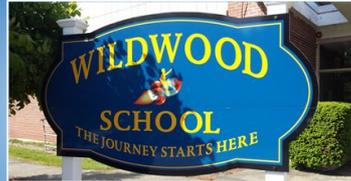
- Based on our building configurations and current class rosters, we project that we will be able to accommodate in-person learning for those who choose that model in grades K-12, providing a minimum of 3-ft. social distancing.
 - We don't anticipate the need to move students to a new teacher or to new classes if they are moving from hybrid to the fully in-person model based upon preliminary survey data.
- However, if additional students (remote/home schooled, private school or move-ins) wish to return/enroll beyond what we anticipate, there could be issues accommodating students in the current sections.
 - Should this occur, we may need to implement less desirable solutions such as:
 - Assigning a (K-5) student who requests a move to a location different from their "home school"
 - Creating new class sections and re-assigning students to new teachers

Boutwell & Wildwood Pre-K Programs



- The current Pre-K programs support our high-needs students.
 - Currently, we do not have peer models participating in our Pre-K programs.
 - Our intention is to invite students (peer-models) to participate for the remainder of the school year.
 - The number of students invited will be based on space available in the classrooms allowing for 3-6 ft. social distancing.
 - If your child is invited to return this spring, you will be notified directly and given the option to for your child to return if desired.
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Elementary Grades K-5



- Return to full in-person learning on **April 5, 2021** for all families that want their children to attend in-person.
 - Continue to provide a fully remote option for students in Cohort C if they choose to remain remote.
 - Allow hybrid students to move to Cohort C, fully-remote if they choose to.
 - Note: Early Childhood Centers will return to their normal school hours beginning 4/5/2021.
 - Boutwell: 8:00-1:15
 - Wildwood- 8:50-2:05
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What does a change in learning model mean for my child in grades K-5?

We anticipate that the following scenarios will apply however, if for some unforeseen circumstance an exception occurs, families will be notified and provided an opportunity to discuss which model will be best for their child.

Current Hybrid Students: (Cohorts A, B, and D)

- If your child is currently hybrid (Cohorts A or B) and you select the fully-in-person model, your child will remain with the same teacher.
- If your child is currently hybrid (Cohorts A or B) and you select the fully-remote model, your child will be assigned to a new teacher.
- If your child is currently attending 3, 4, or 5 days per week (Cohort D), and you select the fully-in-person model, your child will increase to 5 full-days with the same teacher.
- If your child is currently attending 3, 4, or 5 days per week (Cohort D), and you select the fully-remote option, your child will attend remotely 5 days per week and be assigned to a new teacher.

Current Remote Students: (Cohort C)

- If your child is currently in the fully-remote model (Cohort C) and you wish to remain fully-remote for the rest of this school year, your child will likely stay with the same teacher.
- If your child is currently in the fully-remote model (Cohort C) and you choose the fully-in-person model, your child will be assigned to a new teacher.

Wilmington Middle School



- Return to full in-person learning **no later than Monday, April 26th** eliminating the hybrid model. DESE's required date is Wednesday, April 28th.
 - Continue to provide a fully-remote option for students in Cohort C if they choose to remain remote.
 - Allow Cohort C students to move to fully in-person learning if they choose to.
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What does a change in learning model mean for my child in grades 6-8?

We anticipate that the following scenarios will apply however, if for some unforeseen circumstance an exception occurs, families will be notified and provided an opportunity to discuss which model will be best for their child.

Current Hybrid Students: (Cohorts A, B, and D)

- If your child is currently hybrid (Cohorts A or B) and you select the fully-in-person model, your child will remain with the same schedule/teachers.
- If your child is currently hybrid (Cohorts A or B) and you select the fully-remote model, your child will be assigned a new schedule/teachers.
- If your child is currently attending 3, 4, or 5 days per week (Cohort D), and you select the fully-in-person model, your child will increase to 5 full-days likely with the same teachers.
- If your child is currently attending 3, 4, or 5 days per week (Cohort D), and you select the fully-remote option, your child will attend remotely 5 days per week and will likely be assigned a new schedule/teachers.

Current Remote Students: (Cohort C)

- If your child is currently in the fully-remote model (Cohort C) and you wish to remain fully-remote for the rest of this school year, your child will likely stay with the same schedule/teachers.
- If your child is currently in the fully-remote model (Cohort C) and you choose the fully-in-person model, your child will be assigned a new schedule/teachers.

Wilmington High School



- Return to full in-person learning **no later than Monday, April 26th** eliminating the hybrid model. A date for High Schools to return to full in-person learning has not yet been announced by DESE.
 - Continue to provide a fully-remote option for students in Cohort C if they choose to remain remote.
 - Allow Cohort C students to move to fully in-person if they choose to.
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What does a change in learning model mean for my child in grades 9-12?

We anticipate that the following scenarios will apply however, if for some unforeseen circumstance an exception occurs, families will be notified and provided an opportunity to discuss which model will be best for their child.

Current Hybrid Students: (Cohorts A, B, and D)

- If your child is currently hybrid (Cohorts A or B) and you select the fully-in-person model, your child will remain with the same schedule/teachers.
- If your child is currently hybrid (Cohorts A or B) and you select the fully-remote model, your child's schedule will stay the same and they will livestream into their classes daily.
- If your child is currently attending 3, 4, or 5 days per week (Cohort D), and you select the fully-in-person model, your child will increase to 5 full-days likely with the same schedule/teachers.
- If your child is currently attending 3, 4, or 5 days per week (Cohort D), and you select the fully-remote option, your child will attend remotely 5 days per week and will likely livestream into the same scheduled classes.

Current Remote Students: (Cohort C)

- If your child is currently in the fully-remote model (Cohort C) and you wish to remain fully-remote for the rest of this school year, your child's schedule will stay the same and they will livestream into their classes daily.
- If your child is currently in the fully-remote model (Cohort C) and you choose the fully-in-person model, your child will attend in-person likely keeping their same schedule and teachers. .

Information Needed

- Based upon the information gathered in the recent community survey we want to respect the decisions of our families about what they believe is best for their child.
- With the age of our elementary facilities in particular and limited classroom spaces, each and every student needs to be factored into our plans to ensure we can adhere to the safety guidance.
- With the support of the above recommendations, we need to gather concrete information from families regarding their plans for their child(ren).
 - A survey will be sent to families on **Thursday, March 11th** asking for a binding decision about their plans for learning models and use of transportation . The survey will close **Sunday, March 14th** at **5PM**.
 - There will be one survey for each school.
 - Please complete the survey only once for each child.



Looking Ahead

Spring

- DESE has announced that they will provide student supports in key areas of mental health & support of seniors who did not meet competency determination.
- WPS plans to bring forth to the March 24th School Committee meeting a proposal for additional resources to support the mental health and well-being of our students and families.

Summer

- DESE has announced that they will be putting together summer school programming & academic interventions that will include a state-wide acceleration academy program with a focus on “gateway grades.”
- DESE plans to work with districts in identifying high-quality programs to serve students in all grades and subjects.

Fall

- DESE anticipates a full in-person return across all grade levels in September
- Expectations of remote instruction will no longer be in place
- DESE has announced plans to work with districts/schools to ensure a focus on:
 - Teaching grade-level content and scaffolding for all learners
 - Supporting the needs of the whole child, including mental and physical health
 - Accelerated instruction & extra help in core academic programs



Next Steps



NEXT
STEPS

Family Survey

- The District must gather exact student/family requests for the desired learning model for the remainder of the school year
- Sent out Thursday, March 11 with a deadline of Sunday, March 14

Ordering of Furniture/Storage Units

- Completed first thing the week of March 15 (if not before)

Negotiations

- While DESE is requiring districts to make a full return to in-person learning School Committee's are still obligated to negotiate mandatory subjects of bargaining
- First session is planned with the WTA Monday, March 15

Recruitment of Community Volunteers

- With the doubling (in some cases tripling) of lunch locations spread throughout the school schools we will be considering the utilization of volunteers to assist with lunch and/or recess supervision

Family & Community Engagement

- With the arrival of DESE guidance clearing a path to return we want to leverage our partnerships with parents/guardians to best support both our return & recovery from these last few months
- As part of our continued planning we will share ideas & opportunities at the March 24th Committee meeting

Transportation



How the Transmission Rate is Drastically Reduced on School Buses

- Most students are not on board a vehicle for more than 15 minutes
- Masks are required
- Windows and roof hatches are slightly opened reducing the concentration of infectious droplets and increasing air circulation allowing passengers to be on board longer
- Students from the same household should be seated together on the bus as we shift to a full reopening. Doing so will allow us to maximize distancing and continue to adhere to previous guidelines on most vehicles.
- Vehicles are sanitized daily and high touch-surfaces cleaned regularly

- All students' mode of transportation to and from school will remain the same during this shift to full in-person learning and bus passes will still be required in order to board the bus.
- If you would like to make a change to your student's transportation, such as cancel bus transportation or register to request a pass, you may do so by contacting the Transportation Department at:

Email: transportation@wpsk12.com

Phone: (978) 694-6000 Option 9

Questions

