

Statement from the Brookline School Committee's Negotiations Subcommittee

March 19, 2021

The Public Schools of Brookline have been working to move our students quickly and safely from a hybrid schedule to fully in-person learning. As the Interim Superintendent, Dr. James Marini, has announced, students in grades 2-5 will return to the buildings full time on March 29, those in grades 6-8 will return on April 12, and those in grades 9-12 are now returning on a rolling basis as space becomes available. K-8 students have recently been given another opportunity to switch into or out of the Remote Learning Academy, which will continue operating through the end of the school year. High school students will be given the same opportunity shortly.

The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) of December 2020 between the School Committee and the Brookline Educators Union (BEU) outlined a process for modifying the 6-foot distancing requirement that has limited the capacity of our classrooms and instructional spaces. As part of this process, the School Committee has engaged in three weeks of negotiations with the BEU over the impacts of changing to 3-foot distancing. While we reached agreement on some important points, the negotiations have ended without an overall signed agreement. Accordingly, the School Committee will be implementing its last best offer, as provided for in the December MOA. Key provisions include:

- Students in grades K-12 will be seated at least 3 feet apart when masked. Educators will be able to maintain 6-foot distancing from students and from each other, except possibly while travelling in the building or in the classroom and unless the nature of their job duties requires them to be closer.
- During unmasked times such as snack and lunch, the district will follow the evolving guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, which currently specifies 6-foot distancing.
- In order to increase student learning time, starting on March 29, the Monday and Friday early dismissal days that were added to support preparation for teaching in the hybrid model will be replaced by full days. To support teacher preparation and district-wide collaboration, Wednesday early dismissals will stay in place.
- Until at least May 7, the district will continue to offer weekly pooled COVID testing to all staff and students who are in person. Data gathered before May 7 will be used to determine whether and how to continue the testing program after that date.

The School Committee shares the community's joy at the imminent return of our students to fully in-person learning, and we are grateful to the educators, staff, administrators, and volunteers who are working to make this happen. They have kept our students afloat through many difficult months with their creativity, hard work, and grace under pressure.

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