

Statement from the Brookline School Committee: November 2, 2020

In an emergency meeting held this morning, the School Committee voted to file a petition for a strike investigation with the Massachusetts Department of Labor Relations. Public employees in Massachusetts are prohibited by law from striking. The School Committee is required to file a petition for a strike investigation because the School Committee was informed late last night by the Brookline Educators Union that the BEU voted to illegally strike tomorrow, November 3rd, because “the membership cannot abide by the School Committee's position on 6-foot distancing.”

The Public Schools of Brookline position is clear: Interim Superintendent Marini has already implemented six-foot distancing in the schools, even as the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has said less than six feet is acceptable. Further, Dr. Marini has said repeatedly that he does not anticipate changing the six-foot distancing unless something significant happens to change our understanding of best practices. This last part is key: best practices can change. Much more is now known about the virus and how to minimize transmission risk than was known just a few months ago (for example, ventilation was a new best practice as recently as July, whereas in late spring scientists were very concerned about surface transmission.) Because of this rapidly-evolving situation, PSB must retain the ability to continue to adhere to best practices. At any point before the end of the school year, the optimal mix of protective measures may be very different and less reliant on distancing. Therefore, taking any action that would limit our ability to adapt is irresponsible and would fly in the face of science and fact-based decision-making.

We recognize the uncertainty and worry that the action by the BEU may cause on PSB students and caregivers in an already uncertain, worrisome year, and we will keep you informed as the situation develops.

Key links to other PSB Health and Safety Best Practices are provided below.

- [Policy on face coverings](#)
- [COVID-19 Return to School Procedures for Families](#) (includes [Illness Guidelines](#) and [Quarantining notification/action flowchart](#))
- [PPE Guidelines](#)