




Opportunities & Challenges

Returning Grades 2-5 to Full Time In-Person Learning


School Committee Presentation
March 4th, 2021

Presentation Objectives


- ❑ To share the obvious opportunities that returning students to five day a week, fully in-person instruction (*noon dismissal on Wednesday*) allows us all
 - ❑ To illuminate the complexities inherent in the work of reopening school to all 2nd - 5th grade students by the start of April
 - ❑ To bring community members into a deeper understanding of the systems at play in these school-based processes
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Opportunities & Benefits

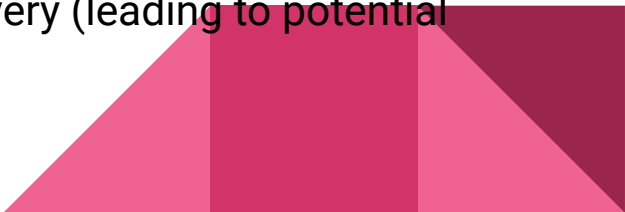
The opportunities and benefits for our students are obvious:

- All 2 - 5 students would be in our care
 - Students who are English learners and/or have IEPs, but do not meet the criteria of being in the school building 5 days per week, can receive more consistent in-person support
 - Deeper understandings of students' mental health needs, both at an individual and collective level
 - Students will also have more opportunities to make and maintain authentic friendships
 - Continuity of instruction across all content areas, continuing to ensure high-quality academic experiences
 - Routine, routine, routine
 - A joy in being all together
 - ... and more!
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Guiding Principles for Planning

- Prioritize the health and safety of PSB students, staff, and families
 - Provide a robust and seamless academic experience and peer cohort for all students regardless of learning model
 - Bring students back to school in-person as classrooms and buildings are certified to allow for a safe learning environment
 - Prioritize the youngest and most vulnerable learners first
 - Simplify choices that students and families need to make; make re-entry seamless
 - Streamlined, transparent communication
 - Put social emotional wellness at the foundation of student success
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Health & Safety Considerations

- Lunch unmasked within 6 feet or less with increased number of students
 - Lack of adequate spaces for 4th - 8th Conservatory (the spaces we traditionally used have been repurposed)
 - Increased need to cross cohort students (at possibly less than 6ft distancing)
 - *English Learner services; Special Education services; Math and Literacy intervention*
 - *World Language; Conservatory*
 - Student ridership on buses will increase across the district; protocols for safety should include transportation
 - Possible need to re-section students to ensure service delivery (leading to potential teacher changes)
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Staffing & Scheduling

- Filling current vacancies due to staff that need to teach remotely, take a leave of absence, or get sick
- Shifts in one school's schedule disrupts the operations at other K-8 schools, including:
 - Shared staff (Special Education and related services, RLA, World Language, Conservatory, Wellness, and more)
- Safely covering classes during unmasked times with more students (lunch, recess, mask breaks)
- Contact tracing larger classroom cohorts without adding additional nursing support and planning for students that are home quarantining
- Possible coverage needs for when staff need to be vaccinated; the physical impact of the vaccine may require a day off depending on how the body responds
- Additional food service support needed (food preparation and food delivery)

Facilities & Space

- Finding spaces for small group instruction for students and for adults who formerly shared small offices/classrooms
 - Providing barriers for unmasked eating times when within 6'. (For students and staff)
 - Identifying outdoor space (weather permitting) for PE, music, lunch, and recess with full classes
 - Addressing significant disparities in classroom sizes within grades (6' distancing in some classrooms, 3.5' distancing in others).
 - Ensuring safe student transitions with full class sizes (i.e accessing student cubby/locker without crossing cohorts)
 - Moving / removing / adding furniture
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Complex Conversations at Many Levels

- ❖ School Committee + BEU
- ❖ Superintendent + Central Office + Principals
- ❖ Panel Four at myriad intersections
- ❖ With families at each layer of district and school leadership
- ❖ School-based conversations:
 - Principals + Staff across all K-8 Schools
 - School-based BEU representatives + Principals
 - Listening to students!

Discussions include: what we are looking forward to when full classes return, health and safety, material needs, SEL needs, logistical needs, and more.

Next Steps: Returning 6th-8th Graders

Like K-5, we want our middle school students back in the building full-time! We miss their passion, energy, and perspective as the oldest students in the building.

Considerations: Similar to bringing back grades 2-5, greater attention is needed to figure out hurdles due to larger class sizes and smaller rooms across the district.

- Shared Staff Coordination: Multiple staff work at multiple schools. Once all 6-8 students are in the building five days a week, staff that flow between buildings will need to be coordinated anew and scheduled.
- Snack & Lunch: Middle school students snack and lunch blocks need to be carefully structured as many middle school classes are larger than in the younger grades and inhabit smaller rooms at some schools. Some students may be eating with masks off at 3 feet of distance. Cafeteria sizes also vary greatly from school to school. Desk barriers for every child feels critical. Also, leveraging outdoor snack and lunch is key, yet we know outdoor spaces are not reliable every day due to inclement weather.
- Furniture needs
- Conservatory: There is not enough room in all schools to host the multiple conservatory classes that are offered in a non-pandemic year. For example, many chorus classes have over 75 students enrolled.

With the need to fit larger classes in classrooms at less than 6 feet, in most cases closer to 3 feet, we need to be prepared for the possibility of more positive cases and a greater number of close contacts.