



Administrative Proposal for Increasing In-Person Learning – February 22, 2021

Preamble

HPS is committed to increasing in-person learning for all students in the safest and most responsible manner possible. We are committed to the safe operations of our school system that ensures, to the best of our ability, the health and safety of all 3,927 students and 700+ staff members.

The proposal tonight prioritizes our youngest learners, and is based upon:

- **the changing conditions of COVID-19 in our schools and community;**
- **the anticipated availability of a vaccine for staff in the very near future;**
- **scientific evidence;**
- **the need to ensure consistent SLT experiences; and**
- **includes reasonable measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our schools which impacts the health and safety of both staff and students**

We recognize how difficult the last eleven months have been on our students, families, and staff. We understand that no plan during the pandemic will universally satisfy all staff, families, or students.

However, we also understand the impact that this pandemic has had on student learning and we must be fully committed to providing the supports and services necessary to every learner in our district.

Why is change needed?

- Regardless of the quality of our online programming, nothing can replicate in-person learning for our students, particularly our youngest learners in grades K-5.
- Isolation from peers and educators impacts the social and emotional well being of both students and educators.
- Simultaneous teaching of students at home and in-person is challenging, particularly for elementary students.
- The longer we remain in hybrid, the greater the risk for academic regression, particularly in our very young learners.
- Students want to be in school daily to see their teacher and friends.
- Families want to return to work.
- COVID-19 in our state, community and schools is reducing.
- Science supports that schools can be operated safely with proper mitigation measures such as wearing masks, handwashing, surveillance testing, and maintaining physical distance.

Why is an adjustment to our learning model appropriate?

- Foster North is open and operating.
- Elementary cafeteria and specialty spaces are now available that were previously used for classrooms and Special Education services.
- No student in-school transmission since mid-December.
- Staff testing has been initiated and student surveillance testing will be initiated after the February break.
- The Hingham community responded to the request of lower community rates. Hingham has achieved “Yellow” for three consecutive weeks was reached. School age rates are lowest.
- Goal of 35 hours per week of SLT addressed in-person learning.

Proposal: Launch Phase-3 Full In-Person Learning: K-5

- **HPS will transition from the Hybrid Learning Model to the Full In-Person Learning Model for grades 1-5**
 - All HPS grades K-5 students (non-remote) will return to full-time in-person learning on or before March 15, 2021, with grades 1-5 attending full days.
 - Families will be asked to commit to in-person or remote learning to limit enrollment/classroom changes between in-person and remote learning students.
 - South, East, Foster (and North Campus), and Plymouth River Elementary Schools will operate a full-day schedule, five days per week.
 - The District will ensure 3'-6' physical distancing of students in grades K-5.
 - The School Lunch program will resume with the start of phase 3, and the District will ensure six (6) foot spacing for all students during lunch, snack, and mask breaks.
 - The District will ensure that educators may maintain at least 6 feet physical distancing from students.

Proposal: Elementary Remote Learning

- **As the district's primary Elementary Learning Model transitions to Full In-Person, Remote Learning:**
 - The Remote Learning program will be finalized once we receive the survey results from families to determine the numbers of children who are committed to either in-person or remote learning.

Proposal: HPS Grades 6-12 Remain in Hybrid Learning

- HPS Administration proposes that our Hybrid Learning Model continue at the secondary level but will be reviewed weekly for potential expansion.
- Each Principal (Hingham Middle School and Hingham High School) has established an Advisory Committee consisting of their respective school councils, with the addition of a health sector professional, tasked to make recommendations to each Principal for consideration of advancing in-person learning.
- Effective on or before March 17, 2021, students in grades 6-8 will attend school, in-person, on Wednesdays in alternating Cohorts (A and A/B on the first and third Wednesday; and B and A/B on the second and fourth Wednesdays).
- We propose to expand in-person learning for students in grades 6-12 with an emphasis on increasing class sizes while maintaining the 6-foot physical spacing requirements.
- The synchronous learning model provides students with a strong, engaging program. Hingham exceeds DESE requirements for SLT and engagement compared to other districts. This provides us time to determine the appropriate plan.

Supporting Evidence - Hingham

- The Hingham Community COVID-19 data
 - “Yellow” zone for the past 4 consecutive weeks.
 - Among the lowest per capita transmission rate on the South Shore
 - Positive Cases are in a continued decline
- Almost all cases reported have originated outside of the school setting.
- We have very few instances where there were confirmed:
 - staff to staff
 - staff to student
 - student to student transmission in the school setting
- We have no confirmed student-to-staff cases.
- The District initiated Free Covid-19 testing for all staff in January.
 - Over 900 staff tests completed
 - only 1 positive case reported
- The District will initiate pool testing for students with more than 900 families consenting to date.

Supporting Evidence - Elementary

- HPS currently has 1,521 elementary students (K-5) attending in-person in our Hybrid Learning program.
- 134 Fully Remote Elementary Students
 - Grade 1 = 21
 - Grade 2 = 28
 - Grade 3 = 30
 - Grade 4 = 29
 - Grade 5 = 26
- No staff-to-student, student-to-staff, or student-to-student in-school transmission since the case at PRS in mid-December that was quickly resolved.

Supporting Evidence - Secondary

- Secondary aged children represent a higher percentage of overall COVID-19 cases.
- CDC, DPH, and the American Academy of Pediatrics continue to recommend caution and maintaining 6-foot physical distancing to the extent possible for this age group.
- Since the pandemic began, the rate of positive cases at the secondary level are higher than elementary cases, which supports caution for maintaining six-foot physical distancing.

We are Mitigating Risk

- State positivity rates are significantly down since December.
- The Hingham Community responded and reduced rates to “Yellow” zone for the past 4 consecutive weeks. Among the lowest per capita transmission rate on the South Shore.
- The District is one of the first on the South Shore to provide free Covid-19 testing for all staff.
- The District is one of the first on the South Shore to provide free Pooled testing for students. We will advocate, to the extent possible, for more families to participate to enhance safety of full in-person learning.
- Testing initiatives will aid the district in monitoring the prevalence of COVID-19 in our schools and community and act quickly.
- Additional PPE equipment provided:
 - Air purifiers
 - Daily CO2 checks
 - Any and all PPE available

We are Balancing Risk

- Acknowledge Added Risk
 - Reducing from 6' to 3'-6' physical distancing might increase the potential number of children and staff subject to quarantine, entire class quarantine, or perhaps whole school quarantine (pivoting to remote learning).
 - Reducing from 6' to 3'-6' physical distancing might increase the risk of transmission in school. This will need to be monitored. Although, evidence has shown low risk when multiple mitigation factors are in place.
 - High Risk individuals may reconsider their ability to continue in-person due to the potential of increased risk of personal or family safety. This could exacerbate our staffing shortage.
 - Providing unmasked lunches and increased mask breaks (all at 6+ feet) might increase the transmission of COVID-19 in our schools. Cohasset has shown no in school transmission and has held lunch at 6 feet distancing.

Next Steps

- Proposals are subject to Collective Bargaining with the Hingham Education Association. Proposals will be negotiated in good faith and are subject to ratification by both the membership of the HEA and the full membership of the Hingham School Committee.
- It is our intention to collaborate with Administration and Teachers to support our students.
- Tonight, we are asking the School Committee to take a formal vote of support for this proposal, but subject to collective bargaining.
- We will advocate for greater commitment from both staff and families to voluntarily participate in our COVID-19 testing programs. This is an essential component directly related to the health and safety of all students and staff.
- Families will be surveyed to determine commitment of in-person or remote learning and transportation needs.
- We continue to advocate for vaccinations for all staff. Some members of our staff have already received the vaccine but getting everyone vaccinated as quickly as possible is essential.

Questions and Comments
