



OXFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

“Sailing Toward Success”

July 30, 2020

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Staff:

We are writing with an update on our planning process for the start of a new school year in the Oxford Public Schools. We are tentatively scheduled to resume student learning after Labor Day. The School Committee will consider the exact start date at their August 5th School Committee meeting as they also consider our preliminary “Re-Entry Plan Blueprint” for our schools.

Our planning process continues to be guided by a vigilant monitoring of public health data in Massachusetts. We are encouraged that indicators about the virus continue to move in the right direction. The Commonwealth’s careful and disciplined approach has enabled our state to gradually begin reopening, in part because of strong compliance with health and safety precautions. Now, the question on all of our minds is how and when we apply those lessons learned to begin safely reopening our public schools.

As you have heard, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has directed districts to submit a preliminary plan by July 31st that addresses the feasibility of three options for student learning at the start of the school year. **Those options include a full return to daily, in-person attendance, a hybrid plan combining in-school learning with some remote learning, and finally, a 100% remote learning program.** Each district’s final plan, approved by the School Committee, is due to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) by August 10th. Given the significant changes these plans will require in the way schools operate, we also must negotiate our proposal with most of our unions. We are on a very tight timeline - a mere two weeks until the August 10th deadline set by the DESE for submitting final fall plans.

Of course, we know that under normal circumstances, students would be best served in schools every day, interacting with their peers and engaged in live classroom learning. While our educators and families worked incredibly hard last spring to implement remote learning, we know that approach presented enormous challenges, did not reach all students (particularly those with the greatest needs), and is not an adequate substitute for in-person classroom learning with teachers. When out of school, our students also lack access to all of the academic, mental, and physical supports that help ensure their social-emotional well-being, particularly in navigating the effects of trauma during these tremendously challenging times. Therefore, we believe our families and students deserve more than a fully remote learning plan.

4 MAPLE ROAD, OXFORD, MA 01540 · (508) 987-6050 · FAX (508) 987-6054 · TDD LINE (508) 987-6096

The Oxford Public School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, homelessness, pregnancy, pregnancy-related conditions, or limited English proficiency.

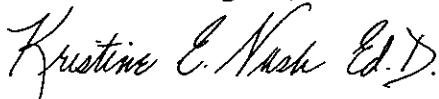
In order to adhere to the school re-opening guidance provided by DESE, and consistent with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), **we do not believe we can safely meet physical distancing requirements with all students and staff in the buildings at the same time in our desire to aim for the higher standard of six feet distance between students in classrooms. However, we do believe we can make significant changes in our school schedules and operating procedures to make a partial return to in-person learning both safe and successful.** This approach will require strategies to ensure physical distancing, as well as a series of other critical health and safety measures, including wearing masks or face coverings, washing hands frequently, cleaning and sanitizing facilities, screening regularly for symptoms of illness, and staying home from school when sick, among others. Our planning process includes a comprehensive set of strategies and investments to minimize the risk of transmitting the virus.

As a result, we have been working collaboratively with all impacted unions for a hybrid learning plan, which would bring the students back into school buildings for in-person instruction in smaller, socially distanced groups on a rotating basis, combined with a robust remote learning program on the days students are not scheduled to be physically in school. This plan also enables us to bring a subset of students in greatest need of in-person instruction and support, particularly students with disabilities, back to school every day – but also in smaller, distanced settings with all other precautions in place.

We recognize that the circumstances of every family and staff member are different, and that no plan ultimately will satisfy everyone in our community. However, please rest assured that we are working diligently to explore every option available to us, but that we will remain guided by the science to keep our students and staff safe and healthy. Additionally, we will be prepared to make adjustments along the way if the public health conditions or other variables change over time.

As we move closer to a final plan, we welcome input and feedback from all stakeholders. On August 5, 2020, we are presenting the District's "Re-Entry Plan Blueprint" to the School Committee members for their review and approval. We invite your comments and ideas to help inform and strengthen our plans after that meeting through August 7th. Please also know that we anticipate holding meetings with parents, guardians, and staff to discuss our plan once it is approved. We will continue to work to prioritize both safety and learning as we prepare for the start of a successful school year. Thank you for your patience and cooperation in these difficult times.

With warmest regards,



Kristine E. Nash, Ed.D.
Interim Superintendent of Schools



Daniel Coonan, Chairman
Oxford School Committee