



Superintendent of Schools
94 North Elm Street, Suite 201
Westfield, MA 01085
Telephone (413) 572-6403
Fax (413) 572-6518

Mr. Stefan Czaporowski
Superintendent of Schools

March 18, 2021

Dear WPS Families,

On Friday, March 5, 2021, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to give the Commissioner of Education the authority to mandate the return of full in-person student learning at any time. On Tuesday, March 9, Superintendents received a memo from Commissioner Riley ordering the return of in-person learning for students in grades K-5 on April 5, 2021, and students in grades 6-8 on April 28, 2021. DESE is expected to announce the return date sometime in April for students in grades 9-12. Rather than wait for this announcement, WPS has committed to bring back our high school students on Monday, May 3, 2021. Families with students that opted for full remote learning can remain fully remote until the end of this school year.

A week after the commissioner's directive was announced, DESE distributed guidance to assist districts on implementing full in-person learning. In short, DESE has reiterated their stance allowing 3 feet of distance between seats in classrooms and 6 feet of distance between seats at lunch. Classroom desks will be arranged so that there is three feet between the left edge of one seat and the right edge of the seat next to it. Cafeteria seats will have six feet between them. Students and staff are still required to wear masks at all times, except when eating and during mask breaks. The restrictions to the number of students permitted on school buses have also been eliminated, allowing all students to ride the bus at the same time. However, students must always wear masks and bus windows must be open.

Currently, we are ensuring that our classrooms can meet the 3 feet separation requirement, developing new bus routes, and looking at solutions to serve student lunches outside when possible. We are surveying families with students in the hybrid model to determine if they will switch to fully remote or return to school in-person every day. We are hiring additional building-based substitutes to ensure the continuity of in person instruction when staff absences occur. We recognize that our staff will need time to plan for the full return of our students. For that reason, I asked the School Committee to approve an Early Release Day on Thursday, April 1, 2021. High schools will dismiss at 11:00 a.m., Middle and Intermediate Schools at 11:30 a.m., and Elementary Schools at 12:15 p.m. There will be no school for students at Fort Meadow Early Childhood Center.

To say that this year has been challenging is an understatement. More obstacles are ahead for sure. We appreciate your patience, understanding, and cooperation. A reminder that it is still imperative that students that are sick do not come to school. Finally, we will continue to work with all families as we move ahead. We look forward to welcoming your children back to school full time in the coming weeks. Please reach out to your building Principal or our Central Office if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Stefan Czaporowski
Superintendent of Schools
Westfield Public Schools