

TRI-COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT'S ROUNDTABLE

45 Holliston Street
Medway, MA 02053

Armand Pires, Ph.D., Co-President
Jeffrey Marsden, Ed.D., Co-President

February 1, 2021

His Excellency Governor Charlie Baker
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon St.
Office of the Governor, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Delivered Electronically and via First Class Mail

Dear Governor Baker,

We, the Tri County Superintendents' Roundtable, write to you as a unified group of 41 administrators, joined in this effort by 24 of the union presidents in our respective districts, to respectfully request that you reclassify educators and make them eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccinations in the earlier part of Phase 2.

We cite the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in urging you to prioritize the health and wellbeing of our educators so that Massachusetts school districts can operate at the fullest possible strength as our nation begins to emerge from this global pandemic.

In making our request, we cite the following:

1. We, as educators and leaders, recognize and agree that the best place for learning for our children is in the classroom.
2. Your office and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) have drawn from the guidance and wisdom of the American Academy of Pediatrics, which strongly advocates for students to return to, at a minimum, an in-person hybrid learning model. AAP further advocates that students should fully return to the classrooms where and when possible.
3. We have a unique and profound responsibility to support the educational, emotional, physical, and mental well-being of the children across the Commonwealth.
4. First responders, healthcare workers, and educators share a commonality in their day-to-day work in that they must come into contact with dozens or hundreds of people on a daily basis and often cannot be completely socially distant from those they serve.
5. The stress and anxiety placed on educators as they continue to put themselves in this position without the protection of an existing vaccination is unfair and is not in the best interests of advancing public education in the Commonwealth.
6. Beyond the teachers, themselves, there is a very real risk that an educator could expose their own families after contracting COVID-19 in the performance of their duties.

7. In order to perform our jobs at the level desired by your office, DESE, and the AAP, the professionals in our field should be vaccinated as quickly as possible so they can continue to work with the children they come into contact with daily.
8. The CDC's guidance focuses on "Preservation of Societal Functions" under which health care personnel, frontline essential workers, and other essential workers are identified for Phase I vaccination. We state, without reservation, that access to public education and access to school facilities is a societal function.

We believe it is inarguable that educators are front line workers. Given the societal need for In-person public school -- not just public school via Zoom -- and the expectations set by your office and DESE, educators should be vaccinated immediately and without delay so that they can perform their duties safely and securely and without fear for their own lives and the lives of their own families by simply coming to work.

No educator should be asked to choose between their biological children and their school children.

While we understand that there is not an inexhaustible supply of vaccines, we believe the vaccination of educators should be a priority and is deserving of earlier Phase 2 status. We also call your attention to other states of similar educational expectations including New York, Connecticut, Maine that have classified educators in the first phase of vaccination.

As always, thank you for your leadership during this unprecedented time, and thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Armand Pires, Ph.D., Superintendent
Medway Public Schools
Megan Morrison, President
Medway Federation of Teachers

Dr. Donna Flaherty, Executive Director
ACCEPT Education Collaborative

Peter Light, Superintendent
Acton Boxborough Reg. School District
Michael Balulescu, President
Acton Boxborough Education Assoc.

Jeffrey Marsden, Ed.D, Superintendent
Medfield Public Schools

James Adams, Superintendent
Ashland Public Schools
Michelle Smith, President
AES Union

John Phelan, Superintendent
Belmont Public Schools
John Sullivan, President
Belmont Educators Association

Peter Marano, Superintendent
Bellingham Public Schools

Dr. Laurie Hunter, Superintendent
Concord-Carlisle School District
Kate Squire, President
Concord Teachers Association

James O'Shea, Superintendent
Carlisle Public Schools
Linda Vanaria, President
Carlisle Teachers Association

Michael Welch, Superintendent
Dedham Public Schools
Timothy J. Dwyer, President
Dedham Educators Association

Carol Cavanaugh, Ph.D., Superintendent
Hopkinton Public Schools

Andrew Keough, Superintendent
Dover Sherborn Regional Schools
Laura McGovern, President
Dover Sherborn Educators' Association

Dr. Robert Tremblay, Superintendent
Framingham Public Schools
Christine Mulroney, President
Framingham Teachers Association

Dr. Susan Kustka, Superintendent
Holliston Public Schools

Karen Crebase, Superintendent
Hopedale Public Schools
Lisa Bertonazzi, President
Hopedale Educators Association

Marco Rodrigues, Ed.D., Superintendent
Hudson Public Schools

Paul Zinni, Superintendent
King Philip Reg. School District
Christina Logan, VP
King Philip Teachers Association

Brian Haas, Superintendent
Maynard Public Schools

Dr. Tammy Quinn, Superintendent
Norfolk County Agricultural High School

Ingrid Allardi, Ph.D., Superintendent
Norfolk Public Schools
Thomas Cavanaugh, President
Norfolk Teachers Association

Jonathan Evans
South Middlesex Reg. Voc.Tech School
District
Phillip Rosano, President
Keefe Tech Educators Association

Stephen Dockray, Superintendent
Tri-County RVTSD

Dr. Sara E. Ahern, Superintendent
Franklin Public Schools
Donna Grady, President
Franklin Educators Association

Rebecca McFall, Ed.D., Superintendent
Lincoln Public Schools

Joseph P. Maruszczak, Ed.D., Superintendent
Mendon-Upton Reg. School District

Robert Mullaney, Superintendent
Millis Public Schools

Anna Nolin, Ed.D, Superintendent
Natick Public Schools

Daniel E. Gutekanst, Superintendent
Needham Public Schools
Caren Figer, President
Needham Education Association

David Thomspn, Ed.D, Superintendent
Norwood Public Schools
Jody Smith, President
Norwood Teachers Association

Greg Martineau, Superintendent
The Public Schools of Northborough and
Southborough

V. James Marini, Ph.D., Interim Superintendent
The Public Schools of Brookline
Jessica Wender-Shubow
The Brookline Educators Union

Brad Crozier, Superintendent
Sudbury Public Schools

Elizabeth McGonagle, Executive Director
The Education Cooperative

Patrick Lattuca, Superintendent
The Education Cooperative Connections
Academy
Brittany Russell, President
TECCA

Deanne Gladston, Ed.D., Superintendent
Watertown Public Schools
Debra King, President
Watertown Educators Association

David Lussier, Ed.D., Superintendent
Wellesley Public Schools
Kyle Gekopi, President
Wellesley Educators Association

Dr. Marguerite Connolly, Superintendent
Weston Public Schools
Susan Bairstow, President
Weston Educators Association

Brian Reagan, Ed.D., Superintendent
Waltham Public Schools
Nathaniel Rono/Ryan Hoyt, Co-Presidents
Waltham Educators Association

Bridget Gough, Ed.D., Superintendent
Walpole Public Schools
Dave Cuzzi, President
WTA Union

Arthur Unobskey, Superintendent
Wayland Public Schools

Emily Parks, Superintendent
Westwood Public Schools



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February 2, 2021

Armand Pires, Ph.D.
Co-President Tri-County Superintendents Roundtable
Superintendent
Medway Public Schools

Jeffrey Marsden, Ed.D.
Co-President Tri-County Superintendents Roundtable
Superintendent
Medfield Public Schools

Dear Superintendent Pires and Superintendent Marsden,

Thank you for your letter of February 1. While testing and, ultimately, vaccinations are important tools to increase community confidence and mitigate staffing challenges due to sickness and quarantines, the best available research and a growing body of in-state experience continue to inform our view that school districts should open their classrooms for in-person instruction as soon as possible, for as many students as possible. Not only do we believe that schools can operate safely before the vaccine is fully deployed, but we also know that in-person teaching and learning is critical to the educational progress of our children, their mental health, and their social-emotional development.

A central principle in our planning for the distribution of the COVID vaccine has been to focus on those individuals and communities that are most at risk or have been hardest hit by this horrible pandemic. Early education and K-12 workers are in Phase Two, which we hope to begin in the near future. The Commonwealth is constrained by the supply of vaccine received from the federal government; at this time and for the foreseeable future, the state receives 86,000 first-doses weekly. We are rapidly building capacity so that as the vaccine supply increases, so will our ability to offer vaccinations without delay. Educators and school staff who are working with students, especially in those cities and towns with the highest rates of the virus, are prioritized to make sure they can continue to deliver this critical service without interruption.

In the meantime, we have launched a statewide COVID testing initiative to provide universal, weekly testing for all students and staff who are coming to school for in-person instruction, as a complement to other testing resources that we have previously made available to school districts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. A. Peyser', with a stylized flourish at the end.

James A. Peyser
Secretary of Education