



DRACUT PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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Steven Stone
Superintendent of Schools

March 19, 2021

Re: Full In-Person Learning Update

Dear Parents/Guardians:

I am writing to provide an update on the district's efforts in light of the state-wide effort to reestablish full in-person learning in schools. As previously described, I am proud of the fact that throughout this seemingly never-ending public health emergency, the Dracut Public Schools has provided more live-learning time than all but five other district in Massachusetts. That said, we are eager to return to normal operations as quickly and effectively as possible.

With the state's revision of various guidance and student learning time regulations, we have been working internally in preparation for the return of full in-person learning this spring. The state has established return dates for elementary schools (April 5, 2021) and middle schools (April 28, 2021). The return to in-person learning for high schools will be shared by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) sometime in April.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: Working groups at all levels have been evaluating our capacity to meet those targets, establishing operating protocols, and taking steps to meet logistical needs. **At this time, I anticipate a return to full in-person learning at the elementary level on Monday April 5, 2021.** In order to meet that target date, a number of things must occur.

We have worked hard to establish educationally sound learning environments over the past number of years, in part by the use of tables and collaborative learning spaces. To comply with state guidelines, we must replace all tables with rows of desks, with all students facing in the same direction. In order to meet the 3' physical distancing requirement, the district has had to order more than 600 desks and 600 chairs to support classroom configurations. Those are on order, with arrival dates starting early next week. A massive amount of moving will need to occur in the coming days, taxing our custodians, maintenance workers, teachers, and administrators. The moving also includes the relocation of a number of classrooms within schools in order to ensure compliance with distancing guidelines.

Given the delivery dates we have received for the furniture and the planning already established to support this logistical undertaking, **I currently do not anticipate seeking a delay in full in-person learning for the elementary schools.** If there must be a delay, I will provide information as early as possible. I do need, however, to give teachers, custodians, and maintenance workers time to accomplish these taunting tasks. **To that end, at this time, it is very likely that I will call for a remote learning day at the elementary level on Thursday, April 1, 2021.** I will make the final decision towards the end of next week based progress earlier in the week.

As elementary families are aware, we conducted a recent survey to determine whether families of students

in the Remote Learning Academy (RLA) would be returning to our buildings and whether hybrid students would be moving to the RLA. Those surveys have been completed. To accommodate the movement of approximately 110 elementary students back into our physical schools from the RLA, as well as the combining of both hybrid cohorts, a number of new classrooms must be created at various grades and schools. Principals have already begun working on class assignments. This will necessitate some number of students in those grades/schools to be reassigned to a different teacher.

REMOTE LEARNING ACADEMY: Students continuing in the RLA will be able to stay enrolled in the program for the remainder of the school year, although, as in the physical schools, the movement of such large numbers of students between models will require some number of RLA student to be reassigned to another teacher. That information will be forthcoming through Mr. Hill's office.

Moving forward, any families who wish to move their children from in-person learning in the schools to the Remote Learning Academy, or from the RLA to in-person learning must contact either their child's building principal and, if currently enrolled in the RLA, Mr. Hill. Any changes will take some number of weeks given the need to address class lists and other logistics. **At the elementary level, any new requests to return to a school building may require a student to be enrolled in a class with an opening at the student's grade level other than the one the child would normally attend, given strict caps caused by physical distancing requirements.**

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOLS: As stated previously, the dates of return to full in-person learning at the middle and high school levels, are later in the spring. As the district firms up plans for each level, parents and students will be updated. Families should expect surveys related to their intent to be forthcoming.

For high school seniors, planning is already underway for graduation (Friday, June 4, 2021) and other senior activities. Mr. Manley will be providing further information in the coming weeks.

TRANSPORTATION: For any students returning to our physical schools, any requests for a bus pass should be directed to transportation@dracutps.org.

POOL TESTING: We have completed two cycles of pool testing in the schools. Families interested in enrolling their children in pool testing should contact their child's building principal.

It has been a long, trying year since our schools closed for the first time in the face of the COVID-19 health emergency. I have been regularly thanking you all for your continued patience. The shift to full in-person learning will likely be the last large scale change until the summer arrives. As with all of our shifts and adjustments, and hopefully for the last time, I thank you for that patience and understanding.

If you have any questions about the shift to full in-person learning, please feel free to contact a building principal. If you have any questions about the district's approach to the ongoing health emergency, please feel free to contact me directly.

#MIDDIEPRIDE

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Stone". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Steven Stone
Superintendent of Schools