

Medfield Public Schools Office of the Superintendent Fall 2021 Opening Plan

September 3, 2021

Previous Version: August 27, 2021

INTRODUCTION

Medfield Public Schools continues to confront the challenge of supporting its students, faculty, staff, and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March 2020, teaching and learning have evolved as we adapted and modified longstanding practices to support all learners. To understand the impact of these adaptations and to support continuous improvement, the district captured academic and operational data throughout the year. Over the past few months, the Medfield Public Schools Leadership Team as well as other important stakeholders used these data to reflect upon the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning within the district and determine areas of strengths and improvement. This Fall 2021 Opening Plan is the culmination of these analyses, informing each building's opening plans that will help ensure a successful school year.

FALL 2021 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In July 2020, the following seven guiding principles were adopted to govern pandemic-era teaching and learning within our district. Revisiting these principles a year later, we believe these guidelines are still essential in guiding the district this upcoming school year:

- The safety of students and staff is a priority
- Every student will have daily, impactful learning experiences
- Education will take a whole-child approach- valuing the developmental, emotional, and academic needs of each child-we need to strike a balance

- Teaching and learning will exceed DESE guidelines, frameworks, and expectations
- Students will receive consistent experiences within the grade, across the school, and throughout the district
- The curriculum will support learning in a broad range of disciplines and provide diverse perspectives
- Decisions will be based on evolving state directives using real-time data - we have to adapt

A RETURN TO FULL IN-PERSON LEARNING

Medfield Public Schools' adoption of impactful health and safety protocols coupled with the extensive use of vaccines in our district, allows for a full return to a safe in-person school experience for all students. This return to school will look much like the pre-COVID instructional environment albeit with the use of masks (see 'State Guidance') and physical distancing during snacks and lunch (see 'Health and Safety').

The start of the academic year for Grades 1-12 students will be **Wednesday, September 1, 2021**. Pre-K and Kindergarten students will start on **Wednesday, September 8, 2021**. As articulated above, DESE guidance requires that all occupants of school buildings (over the age four) must wear masks. This guidance was further reinforced by the Medfield School Committee's adoption of policy [EBC- Supplemental Interim Policy to Address the COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis School Year 2021-2022](#). Therefore, all Medfield Public Schools PreK-12 students, faculty, and staff will be required to wear a mask through **October 1, 2021**. At that time, building, community, and state-level data will be analyzed to determine eligibility to lift the mask mandate. In addition, 80% of the building's occupants must be vaccinated. Unvaccinated faculty, staff, and students will still be required to wear masks at all times. More guidance from DESE will be forthcoming.

School Start and End Times- This year, each school will return to traditional (pre-pandemic) schedules. These times are as follows:

- Medfield High School- 7:40 - 2:07
- Blake Middle School- 7:40 - 2:07
- Dale Street School- 8:25 - 2:55

- Wheelock School- 8:30 - 3:00
- Memorial School
 - Full Day K & 1- 8:25 - 2:55
 - K- Half Day AM- 8:25 - 11:15
 - K- Half Day PM- 12:05 - 2:55
 - PreK- Four Day Extended- 9:00 - 2:00
 - PreK- Four Day AM- 8:45 - 11:15
 - PreK- Three Day PM- 12:15 - 2:45
 - PreK- Two Day PM- 12:15 - 2:45

Transportation- Bus transportation is provided for all students that meet the distance requirements. Information regarding bus stops and pick-up times will be issued directly to parents/guardians. Federal regulations require that all students and drivers, regardless of vaccination status, wear masks while on the bus, and windows are required to be open. Bus seating will be assigned in order to facilitate contact tracing, if needed.

For parents and guardians who choose to drop off their students at school, pick up and drop off protocols are building-based and traffic patterns will return to those in place before the pandemic. Principals will provide traffic pattern information.

STATE GUIDANCE

Over the past few months, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) issued several [recommendations and/or mandates](#) intended to guide districts' opening plans. As of August 27, 2021, the following state guidelines are in place:

- All schools will be open in-person, full time, five days a week. There are no remote learning options available.
- All occupants of school buildings (over the age four), are required to wear a mask through October 1, 2021. At that time, the mask mandate may be lifted if 80% of the building's occupants are vaccinated. Unvaccinated staff and students would continue to need to wear masks (see 'Masking Requirement' below)

- There are no physical distancing requirements for the 2021-2022 academic year, including mealtimes. It is recommended that districts and schools encourage students to eat meals outside and/or distance themselves while eating.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

As articulated within the seven guiding principles adopted in July 2020, student and staff safety is of the utmost importance. The district's health and safety protocols are informed by several sources including the DESE's [Updates to COVID 19 Guidance \(5/27/21\)](#), DESE's [Implementation of DESE Mask Requirement \(8/25/21\)](#), and guidance from [Medfield Board of Health](#), the Medfield Public Schools physician, and the Medfield school nurses. In addition, parent input provided meaningful additional feedback. Drawing from these sources, the Superintendent shared with the Medfield Public Schools community [details on how the district will support the safe return to school for all students](#) during the August 26, 2021 meeting of the Medfield School Committee. Below are details on each of the strategies and policies articulated in the presentation.

Hand Hygiene- Hand sanitation mitigation strategies include the use of free-standing and wall-mounted touch-free hand sanitizer dispensers. Parents and guardians should contact the school nurse if their child has any concerns with the use of hand sanitizers.

Ventilation- Ventilation continues to be of the utmost priority in all school buildings. All HVAC systems were repaired or upgraded throughout the district. HVAC systems are set to introduce 80% fresh air into the classrooms and all MERV 8 (univents) and MERV 13 (rooftop units) filters are changed three times a year. To support these filtration systems, windows will continue to be open in each classroom. To ensure a safe environment, air quality is regularly tested.

Other Mitigation Strategies- Other mitigation measures, such as the use of plexiglass dividers, will not be in place at the start of the school year but may be added as needed. In addition, students/faculty will not be required to wipe desks at the end of class periods.

Pooled (PCR)Testing- During the 2020-2021 school year, Medfield Public Schools’ pooled testing program was deemed a national model by Congressman Jake Auchincloss on the floor of the U.S. Capitol. The efficiency of our school nursing team as well as the widespread participation of students and faculty paved the way for a safe learning environment by allowing for early identification of COVID-19 exposure. This year, students from kindergarten through grade 12 are eligible to participate. The pooled testing program will commence in mid-September.

BinaxNow Antigen (Rapid)Testing- Through participation in a [DESE-sponsored program](#), students and staff within Medfield Public Schools have access to COVID-19 testing that provides results within 15 minutes. The efficiency of the BinaxNow Antigen Test is an essential aspect of the district’s Test and Stay program, which allows close contacts to remain in school so long as the student/staff member tests negative from the day of exposure for at least five consecutive days (see ‘Close Contacts’ below). In addition, this test will be used for students and staff who may develop symptoms while at school and as a follow-up to pooled testing, as needed. Our nurses will be sending out signup information soon.

Vaccination Rates- Overall, vaccination rates in Medfield, both its eligible student aged population and the community-at-large, is above the averages in both Norfolk County and the Commonwealth.

**Medfield, Norfolk County, and Massachusetts Vaccination Rates- Full Vaccination
(8/19/21)**

Medfield Population	% eligible population fully vaccinated
Age 12-15	77%
Age 16-19	>95%
Overall	80%

Norfolk County Population	% eligible population fully vaccinated
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Overall	77%
Massachusetts Population	% eligible population fully vaccinated
Overall	76%

Sources: [Massachusetts Department of Public Health Municipality Vaccination Report 8/19/21](#); [CDC.gov \(8/21/21\)](#)

It is important to note that the figures above only reflect the fully vaccinated population. Some students have received their first shot only and thus are not represented in this table. These students are encouraged to receive their second vaccination at the prescribed time.

Parents/guardians should contact their pediatrician or our school nurses if they have any questions.

Positivity Rates- The Town of Medfield continues to have low rates of COVID-19 infections (1.82%) as compared to surrounding municipalities (8/19/21). That said, the Medfield Public Schools community should continue to adopt best practices in COVID-19 prevention to ensure a safe environment for all.

Regional Comparison as of August 19, 2021
Data reported from the Department of Public Health

	Medfield	Dedham	Dover	Millis	Walpole	Westwood
<i>Total Cases</i>	630	2526	260	493	2212	1136
<i>Two Week Case Count</i>	17	32	10	7	49	30
<i>Average Daily Incidence Rate/100K Over 14 Days</i>	10.8	8.3	13.9	6.4	13.4	14.6
<i>Total Tests</i>	35,049	84,252	18,439	18,069	68,394	46,508
<i>Total Tests (Last 14 Days)</i>	1,046	1,868	525	479	1,797	1,364
<i>Percent Positivity</i>	1.82%	1.87%	1.90%	1.67%	3.12%	2.27%

Over Last 14 Days						
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Source: <https://www.town.medfield.net/1917/COVID-19-Data-Dashboard>

Quarantining- Regardless of vaccine status, individuals who test positive for COVID-19 must quarantine for 10 days from the onset of symptoms (counted as day 0) or if asymptomatic, 10 days from the date of a positive test (day 0). **Parents/guardians should contact the school nurse and principal if their student tests positive.**

Close Contacts- When an individual is identified as a close contact to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, those individuals who are vaccinated are not required to test or quarantine unless they develop symptoms.

- Test and Stay Program- Unvaccinated close contacts who are asymptomatic may remain in school (as opposed to quarantining at home) only if 1) they are masked at all times except when eating and 2) participate in daily in-school testing for seven days from the date of exposure.

Symptom Assessment- Parents will again be asked to assess their children for illness daily and to not send ill children to school. Parents/guardians should refer to the following [DESE/DPH updated protocol list of potential COVID 19 symptoms](#):

- Fever (100.0° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New loss of taste or smell
- Muscle aches or body aches
- Cough (not due to other known causes, such as a chronic cough)
- Sore throat, when in combination with other symptoms
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea when in combination with other symptoms
- Headache when in combination with other symptoms
- Fatigue, when in combination with other symptoms
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) when in combination with other symptoms

Students should not attend school if they experience any of the symptoms listed above. Parents/guardians are encouraged to contact their school nurse to provide guidance on symptom assessment and testing needs.

Masking Requirement- [At a special meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education](#), board members voted to declare ‘exigent circumstances’ pursuant to the state’s Student Learning Time regulations and authorized Commissioner Jeffrey Riley to require masks within indoor school environments for all occupants aged five and older through October 1st. As articulated within this authorization, masks are not required outdoors. Students and staff who cannot wear a mask for medical reasons will be exempted to do so, as well as students who have behavioral reasons (please see Policy EBC in the student handbook). Face shields and/or transparent masks may be viable options, depending on the circumstances.

Mask breaks are incorporated into the lunch and snack periods. In addition, teachers may use their discretion to provide supplemental mask breaks during the day.

Physical Distancing- DESE guidance removes physical distancing requirements within the classroom and in lunchrooms. However, Medfield Public Schools has developed building-based lunch protocols that ensure ventilation and spacing. The locations for lunch are as follows:

- High School- Outside weather permitting, otherwise cafeteria and gym
- Blake- Outside weather permitting, otherwise cafeteria and auditorium
- Dale- Cafeteria and gym
- Wheelock- Cafeteria and gym
- Memorial- Cafeteria and gym

With the extension of USDA’s National School Lunch Program COVID-19 response, Medfield Public Schools will continue to provide free lunches for all students this school year.

Snack breaks will take place at the teachers’ discretion in a variety of locations. These include:

- Outside
- In a classroom with a reduced number of students
- In a hallway with a reduced number of students

STUDENT LEARNING

The COVID-19 pandemic indelibly impacted teaching and learning within Medfield Public Schools. With the return to full in-person learning, Medfield Public School educators will focus on a variety of [target areas](#) to ameliorate the impact of the past sixteen months. In addition, they will continue to build upon the meaningful instructional practices forged during the pandemic. As reflected within teacher focus group data, the 2020-2021 academic year was a transformative event. It allowed for a reassessment of long-standing teaching and learning practices and fostered a dynamic infusion of innovative best practices including increased technology use, expanded collaboration, and improved fidelity to curriculum standards and pacing guides.

Keeping both the areas of growth and the areas of needed focus in mind, educators from across the district will work closely with building and district-based instructional leaders on the following areas:

CURRICULUM

- Address areas of focus identified by standardized test data (Benchmark Assessment System, Lexia Rapid, and Renaissance Math) and an analysis of curriculum standards
- Use grade-level curriculum maps to ensure alignment of lesson and unit curriculum goals
- Reflect upon the length and depth of the units to allow for increased focus on “power standards”

INSTRUCTION

- Continue to support students who struggled socially and academically during pandemic-era schooling
- Expand differentiated instruction practices
- Support the continued use of innovative educational technology within the classroom through software and hardware purchases and professional development
- Support standardized practices such as Google Classroom and shared curriculum calendars
- Continue to partner with parents and guardians in supporting students’ learning

STUDENT SERVICES

The Department of Student Services continues to partner with staff and families to support all students. This summer the extended school year programs were offered in-person across the district. All students supported by an Individualized Education Program (IEP) also had the opportunity to attend academic boot camps that supported review and preview of academic material. IEP services will be provided in full and in person throughout the 2020-21 school year. Due to the overwhelmingly positive feedback, IEP team meetings will remain virtual unless otherwise requested.

Reading interventionists will support students in kindergarten through grade 8 and math interventionists will work with students in kindergarten through grade 5. Medfield has also expanded support in this area to include a math teaching assistant shared across all three elementary schools, and an additional .4 reading teaching assistant at the Memorial School. The District will maintain the utilization of the Renaissance STAR Math for universal benchmarking assessments and will be moving back to the DIEBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) assessment in conjunction with the BAS (Benchmark Assessment System) for reading assessments. This progress monitoring data will be a key piece of information used to drive support and instruction for students within the district.

Students that are supported by the English Learner program will continue to receive support in Kindergarten through grade 12. This summer the EL department offered enrichment camps for elementary students to support language development as well as review and preview academic content.

The guidance department will continue to support all students across the district with scheduling and social-emotional support. They will continue to oversee all students supported by a 504 plan as well. The department has expanded to include an additional adjustment counselor at Blake Middle School.

ATHLETICS

The [August 25, 2021 DESE guidance](#) regarding masking also extends to all Medfield Public Schools' athletic programs. As such, masks are required to be worn for all indoor sports only. This guidance impacts Girls' Volleyball during the fall season. All outdoor sports are **not**

required to wear masks during outdoor practices or games. Locker rooms are closed at least through October 1, 2021.

FINE ARTS

Music and theater programming will continue largely unimpeded by the pandemic due to the implementation of several safety measures. For example, the district will supply specially designed masks and bell covers that enable instruments to be used safely. In addition, classes are scheduled in practice rooms and instruction areas that best allow for adequate spacing and ventilation.

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Throughout the pandemic, family and community member feedback has been integral to informing the development and implementation of Medfield Public Schools' operational protocols and educational goals. The foundations of the Fall 2021 Opening Plan was forged in July/August 2020, when a committee of over 90 stakeholders, including students, parents/guardians, educators, and medical personnel, gathered to provide feedback on three reopening plans. Additional feedback was collected throughout the 2020-2021 academic year through parent surveys, Zoom-based forums, and Medfield School Committee meetings. Together, this cache of input helped the hybrid model evolve into the successful in-person model that was adopted in the Winter/Spring of 2021-- weeks earlier than the required timetable set by DESE.

In addition to the feedback gathered throughout the 2020-2021 school year, the more recent family and community feedback opportunities, specifically the Parent Forum (8/16/21), and the accompanying Parent/Guardian Comment Form, provided valuable insight into how to expand and improve upon our Spring 2021 model in the context of the recent DESE opening guidelines. Once the school year is underway, there will be additional opportunities for family and community input--which is essential in shaping an impactful learning environment for all students.

SUMMARY

In closing, this plan highlights how we will expand on the achievements of last year by supporting uninterrupted in-person learning in an environment that focuses on safety for students and staff alike. This plan, like our plan last year, will be revisited and updated as needed. In September, we will be applying for additional funding through the ESSER III grant process and will update this plan with the required information.

We hope that this plan will result in a year like no other-- not marked by shortcomings spawned by the pandemic, rather as a year remembered as one of incredible growth and impact. Please remember to contact the principal with any building-specific questions.