



REGULAR MEETING OF THE HOLYOKE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

DATE: SEPTEMBER 27, 2021

PLACE: Virtual Meeting Via Zoom

HOLYOKE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Holyoke, Massachusetts

MEETING NOTICE

Governor Baker signed a bill into law on June 16, 2021, allowing public bodies to hold remote meetings through April 22, 2022.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH CHAPTER 28 OF THE ACTS OF 2009, SECTIONS 17-20 (FORMERLY SECTION 23B OF CHAPTER 39) OF THE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS, THAT A **REGULAR MEETING** OF THE HOLYOKE SCHOOL COMMITTEE WILL BE HELD AT **6:00 PM** ON **MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2021.**

THE PUBLIC CAN ACCESS THIS MEETING VIA ZOOM WEBINAR HERE:

<https://hps-holyoke-ma-us.zoom.us/j/85266232176?pwd=ci9tWEs3cG81SkQxdXZrWW5GenBXQT09>

(Spanish Interpretation will be available).

HOLYOKE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

AGENDA ATTACHED

CITY OF HOLYOKE
SCHOOL COMMITTEE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE AGENDA

DATE: MONDAY, September 27, 2021

TIME: 6:00 PM

LOCATION: Via zoom webinar

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CALL TO ORDER ~ ROLL CALL ~ PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, s. 20, I am hereby informing all attendees that a video and audio recording is being made of the meeting and the meeting is being live-streamed and run live on the City's community TV channel.

2. STUDENT SHOWCASE -

- Holyoke High School Theatre Company
- M.A.S.S certificate presentation

3. PUBLIC COMMENT (via the remote link above)

- Members of the public wishing to submit public comments can email sagarcia@hps.holyoke.ma.us no later than 3:00 p.m. Monday, September 27, 2021. Comments will either be displayed or read during the meeting.

4. COMMUNICATIONS & REPORTS

- **Superintendent/Receiver Reports**
 - Back to School Update
 - Covid-19 Update
 - Entry Plan Update
 - Annual Planning and Goals

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5. NEW BUSINESS

- *Vote on putting an ad in the Holyoke Hall of Fame Program book - Mr. Jay Whelihan*
- *Vote for delegate to the MASC annual convention in November*

6. ONGOING BUSINESS

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The listing of matters are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

*The Holyoke Public Schools makes available a public discussion period for persons in the audience to address the Committee on specific agenda items. In order to hear as many speakers as possible, the Committee asks individuals to continue their remarks to two (2) minutes. Any person wishing to submit longer testimony should give copies to the Committee Secretary before the meeting so that it may be distributed to Committee members. The speaker can then summarize this testimony at the meeting within the two (2) minute time period. Persons wishing to speak should register with the Committee Secretary immediately before the meeting begins. Individuals who request specific items to be included on the Committee's agenda should mail a written request fifteen (15) days in advance of a Committee meeting date to Sam Garcia, in care of the Receiver's Office, 57 Suffolk Street, Holyoke, MA 01040.

School Committee Meeting
Superintendent/Receiver Report
September 27, 2021



Back to School Update

Opening of Schools Debrief

HPS utilizes the practice of debriefing important projects and activities in order to continually improve. We aim to review the district and school level processes of opening of schools on an annual basis to find ways to improve the process for the following year. Debriefing is a useful tool where actual experiences are discussed and used to develop strategies that will continuously improve management practices.

We administered a survey to Cabinet leaders, Principals, Deans of Management and Operations, school-based clerks and office managers, and other employees involved with the opening of schools. They utilize their own experience, as well as feedback they have collected or trends they have observed along the way. The key questions are:

- Across multiple areas (listed in the survey), where did the district not meet, meet or surpass expectations?
- Across multiple areas (listed in the survey), where did the school not meet, meet or surpass expectations?
- What went well with opening schools?
- What didn't go well with opening schools and why?
- What should we do differently in the future to ensure a better experience for students, staff, and families the first two weeks of school?
- How do we capture this information to use next time?

The people who took the survey also had the option to attend one of two virtual debrief conversations to discuss topics further.

The themes that emerged across the district are:

Strengths

- So many people worked and are working so hard in order to prepare to welcome back and serve students.
- Communication was strong. Expectations about the start of school were strong for the district and provided a good platform for schools to then follow-up with messaging.
- The first day of school was relatively smooth. Families had their children show up on time, people know the expectations on masks, uniforms, being not allowed in the building etc. It was a smooth first day b/c expectations were clear ahead of time.
- Food Services logistics have been working well and schools appreciated being able to pilot new strategies - e.g. plexiglass, spacing out of kids at lunch, assigned seats, rosters, etc.
- Cohort students consistently across multiple transitions: lunch, classroom, specials, etc. Being proactive with nursing upfront with seating charts and cohorting really supports contact tracing.
- Schools had more info earlier for transportation than they ever had; routing was more efficient and easier to make changes for stops.
- Staff and student cultures are strong.
- Position of Dean of Management and Operations allows one person to focus on implementing systems well and allows the principal to focus on other aspects of leading the school.
- Strong participation in Relay training over the summer, with strong evidence of implementation at the start of the school year. Many observations completed!

Weakness

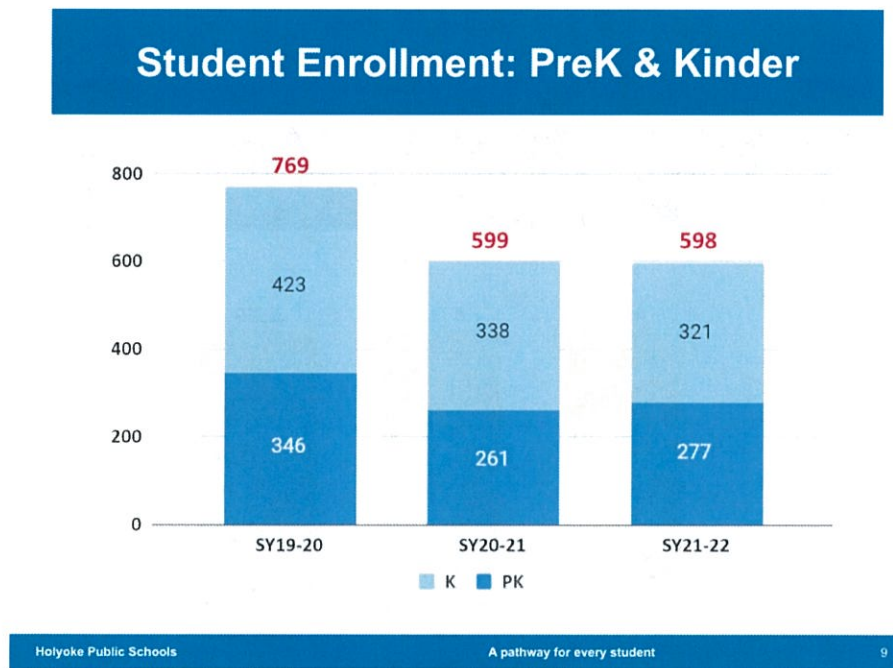
- The level of staffing need for return to school is higher than it is the rest of the year - and we weren't able to fully keep up with demand, especially in Transportation, Technology, Enrollment, Human Resources, Facilities. People in the system are mostly understanding of this but still creates challenges/delays.
- The school year began with some vacancies in positions.
- Missed communicating with the police department about the start date of school, so we were without crossing guards for the opening week.
- Arrival/dismissal procedures (not just for busses) needed refining - it has been refined now but was messy at the start of the year.
- Transportation was the top rated department as "not meeting expectations" due to all the logistics involved, some busses arriving too late or too early, and lack of staffing for specialized van transportation.
- The summer vacation was short, and starting school a week earlier put pressure on the entire system. It made things busier than usual.
- Some confusion around COVID protocols, but worked to quickly resolve and address.
- The professional development plan before school needs to be clearer and more productive in many ways. Every educator needs meaningful, not repetitive PD on the districtwide days. Staff shouldn't be pulled from schools on school-based PD days.

Next Steps

- Each cabinet leader works with their teams to address the weakness areas identified above.
- Schedule Dean of Management and Operations training in the summer to focus on systems and necessary training.
- Update the opening of schools checklist soon.
- Explore how to staff up during the busy season, spread out the demand, stop doing unnecessary tasks and/or automate other tasks in order to increase customer service during the busy season.
- Get feedback from more HPS staff and publicize the SY22-23 calendar earlier.
- Have a transportation-specific debrief to identify what are the transportation challenges we can solve for next year through staffing up (e.g. operations analyst, plus Rebecca knowing Transportation) vs. what is the responsibility of the transportation companies (related to staffing issues).

It is important to note that the cabinet team's observations in the first couple weeks of school led us to tighten up on COVID-19 health and safety measures immediately, which you received via email on September 8th and can be found on our [website here](#).

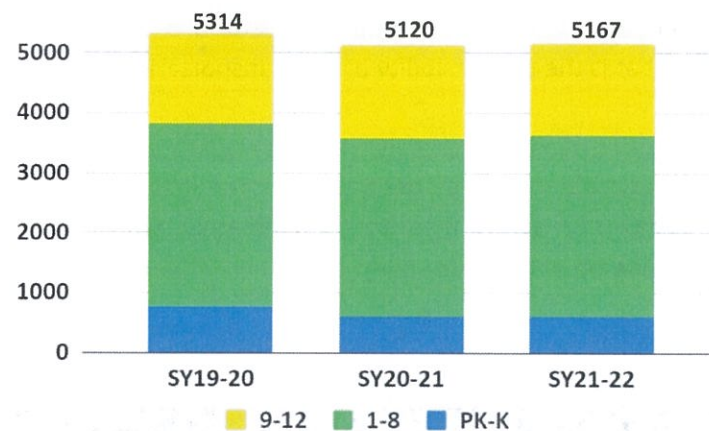
Enrollment



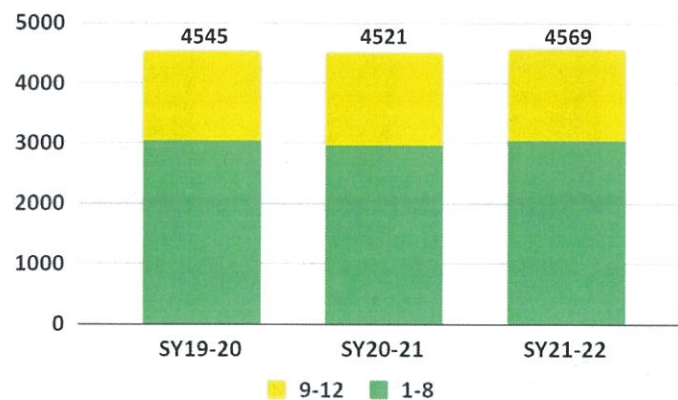
The largest differences in enrollment numbers can be seen in preschool in kindergarten when you compare this current school year and last school year to SY19-20. Our youngest learners aren't being enrolled at the same rate as they were prior to the pandemic.

The total enrollment for grades 1-12 in SY19-20 was 4545, in SY20-21 it was 4521, and this year it is currently 4569. This is really telling. Our enrollment in these grades has remained steady and is actually slightly higher than it was two years ago. But in preschool and kindergarten, we are down 171 students this year vs. SY19-20.

Total Student Enrollment: All Grades

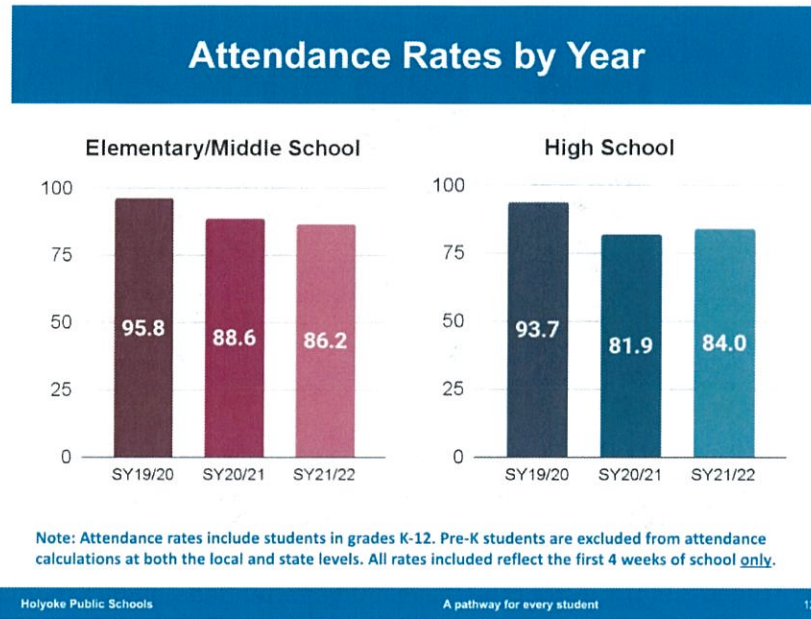


Total Student Enrollment: Grades 1-8 & 9-12

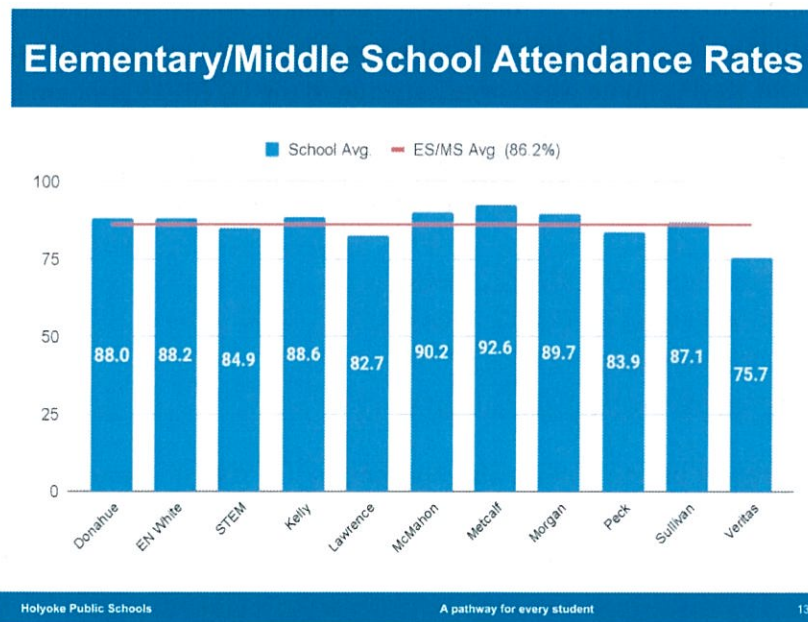


Attendance

The district attendance rate for the first 4 weeks of school is 85.5%, compared to 86.7% in SY20/21 and 95.2% in SY19/20.

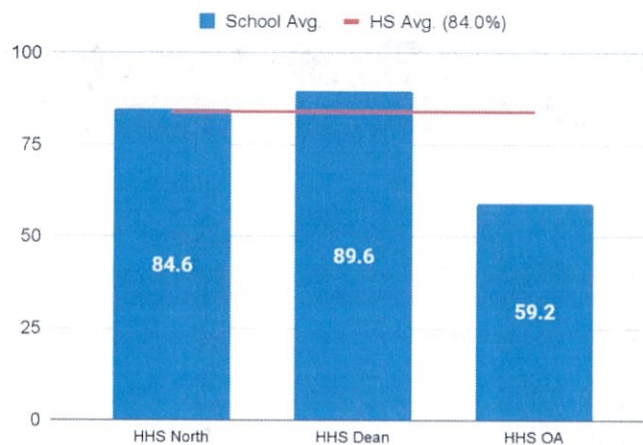


The Elementary/Middle School attendance rate is 86.2%, compared to 88.6% in SY20/21 and 95.8% in SY19/20.



The High School attendance rate is 84.0%, compared to 81.9% in SY20/21 and 93.7% in SY19/20.

High School Attendance Rates



Note: Opportunity Academy (HHS OA) is a program model that serves students who were not succeeding at Holyoke High and attendance rates are expected to be lower than a traditional school model.

Holyoke Public Schools

A pathway for every student

14

There are currently 47 students in the district that have not yet attended school. Schools are still working to clean up enrollments and attendance for students who have not shown up yet. This is expected to be complete by the end of October. No-show counts are subject to change as updates are made to attendance.

The official district attendance policy can be found [here](#). The policy can also be found in the appendix. The policy requires that students stay home from school when sick and/or required to quarantine. We are especially cautious about staying home when necessary due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

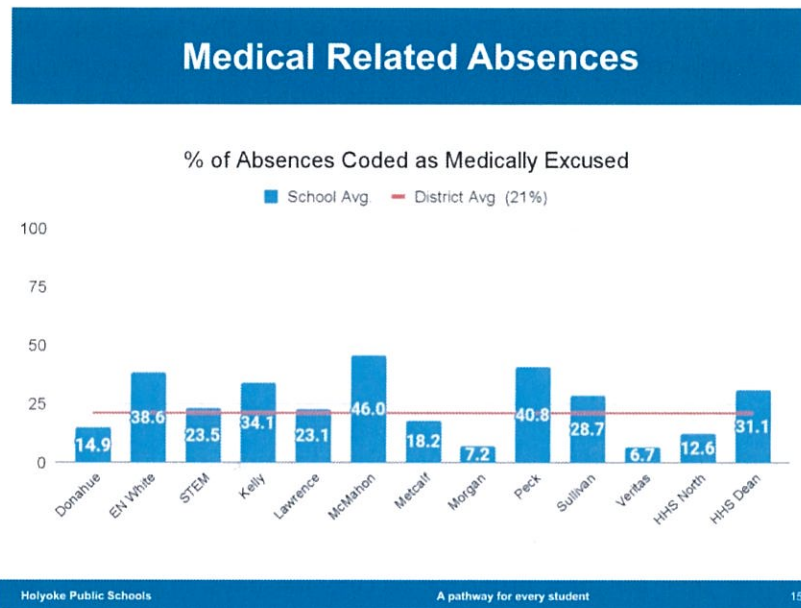
The data team provides weekly summaries of attendance rates to principals, clerks, and cabinet members. Copies of the first 4 week's summaries are available in the links below as well as the appendix:

- [Attendance Summary, SY21/22, Week 1](#)
- [Attendance Summary, SY21/22, Week 2](#)
- [Attendance Summary, SY21/22, Week 3](#)
- [Attendance Summary, SY21/22, Week 4](#)

We are not yet able to report out on chronic absenteeism, as it is still too early in the year to calculate rates accurately. We expect to begin reporting on this in the next 1-2 weeks. At that time, data on chronic absenteeism will be added to the weekly attendance summaries that are sent by the data team.

While we are not able to identify student absences that are specifically covid-related, we do assume that a significant amount of our medical absences for this year are related to covid. If we were to remove these

medically excused absences from our attendance calculation, our attendance rate would increase by approximately 2-3%. The percentage of absences at each school that are coded as medically excused can be seen below.



Staffing Update

This year we have been hit hard by late resignations. This year we had 15 resignations compared to 5 last year.

Staffing Update

- 15 Teaching resignations in August
- New recruitment programs to attract Teachers and Paras
 - Employee Referral Program
 - Expanded recruitment and relocation bonuses
 - Workkeys/Parapro test reimbursement
- 41 Paraprofessional vacancies

TEACHER VACANCIES	
Job Class	Vacancies
COUNSELOR	1
ELEMENTARY	5
ELL	1
ENGLISH	1
SOCIAL STUDIES	1
SPECIAL EDU	8
SPECIALS	6
SUPPORT TEACH	3
VOCATIONAL	1
Grand Total:	27

Holyoke Public Schools A pathway for every student 16

3 of the 8 teacher vacancies are core teaching positions, and the other includes a psychologist, speech pathologist, etc). Specials teachers include Art, Music, Tech, etc. At this time, 22 of the paraprofessional vacancies are special education positions, the others are support roles.

Our recruitment programs will prioritize candidates of color, critical shortage areas, bilingual candidates, and candidates who are deeply connected to the Holyoke community. We are continuously working with higher education institutions and other partners in order to recruit staff to fill these positions. We are hosting recruitment fairs over the next couple of weeks, including one through Get Hired on October 6 @ the Holyoke Mall and an HPS Virtual recruitment fair, and will be partnering with MassHire on September 29, 2021.

Learning Support Plan

We have developed and are implementing a learning support plan that will be in effect for any student who needs to be absent due to a mandatory isolation period for a positive COVID-19 case initiated by an HPS school nurse in accordance with our current health and safety guidelines. While we are implementing the “[Test and Stay](#)” program to minimize the need to quarantine students, those who test positive for COVID-19 must isolate, per their doctor’s, order for 10 calendar days. In addition, those who have not given consent to participate in the Test and Stay program and are determined to be a close contact need to quarantine for 7 calendar days. As a result, we want to be sure to academically support students who must isolate but are healthy enough to continue to learn.

The guidance outlined in our [Fall 2021 Learning Support Plan](#), only applies in the event of a mandated isolation for a positive COVID-19 case. If students are required, by their physician, to be out of school for longer periods of time (14 days or longer) due to severe health needs (for any medical reason) appropriate learning support will be provided per our [homebound instruction policy](#) and all completed documents are received.

- In the event of a short-term absence due to required quarantine students will be provided with access to learning resources remotely.
- Prioritizing daily social-emotional wellness check-ins and learning opportunities, in at least ELA and Math, for every child well enough to learn during the required isolation period.
- Expectations: Educators and school staff will ensure
 - Access to Instructional materials
 - access to class assignments within 2 days of absence.
 - access to a chromebook or other approved electronic device during the absence
 - at a minimum PK-8 students will be assigned the following
 - STMath for 20 mins/day for grades 2-8 and 15 mins/day for PK-K
 - 20 mins/day on Lexia Core 5/PowerUP, or Imagine Learning/iStation.
 - Read for at least 20 mins/daily

- at a minimum 9-12 students will be assigned:
 - daily class assignments (within 2 days of absence)
 - In addition, high school students can also:
 - Gr. 9-10 can complete practice Math and ELA assignments related to MCAS prep
 - Grade 12 can work on college essays and applications for post-secondary programs
 - Gr. 11-12 can practice problem sets from SAT and AP exams
 - Gr. 9-12 should complete 60 minutes of daily independent reading

MCAS STATEMENT - September 21, 2021

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) administered the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) last spring to help teachers, students, and families know where students are excelling and where they need help. It is one measure to help us understand the impact on student learning during the pandemic. DESE is not implementing an accountability system for districts or schools this year, so MCAS will not be a part of any accountability system. Holyoke Public Schools will use the MCAS data as one data point along with internal measures, to support learning acceleration, at the individual school and student level.

The Holyoke Public Schools has begun and will continue to analyze the MCAS data. Our initial analysis revealed three key takeaways:

1. Participation rates for 2021 decreased from 2019, but remained high overall.

District-wide, participation rates decreased 3.1% across all grades and subject. However, participation rates for grades 3-8 in ELA and Math were 95.2% and 94.7% respectively; this represents a less than 3% decrease in participation from 2019. The greatest decline in participation was in Grade 10 Math and ELA, where rates decreased 6.4%. Participation in Math and ELA 10th grade tests were 80.9% and 81.9% respectively.

ELA Participation Rates 2019-2021

Grade	2019			2021			Rate change
	n	tested	rate	n	tested	rate	
3	403	396	98.3	348	330	94.8	-3.5
4	392	386	98.5	409	384	93.9	-4.6
5	397	391	98.5	366	348	95.1	-3.4
6	367	355	96.7	372	362	97.3	0.6
7	331	325	98.2	384	372	96.9	-1.3
8	339	328	96.8	351	327	93.2	-3.6
3-8	2229	2181	97.8	2230	2123	95.2	-2.6
10	416	369	88.7	348	285	81.9	-6.8
District	2645	2550	96.4	2578	2408	93.4	-3.0

Math Participation Rates 2019-2021

Grade	2019			2021			Rate change
	n	tested	rate	n	tested	rate	
3	404	398	98.5	349	331	94.8	-3.7
4	393	384	97.7	409	387	94.6	-3.1
5	399	390	97.7	366	343	93.7	-4
6	368	360	97.8	372	355	95.4	-2.4
7	330	324	98.2	384	369	96.1	-2.1
8	343	334	97.4	351	328	93.4	-4
3-8	2237	2190	97.9	2231	2113	94.7	-3.2
10	417	362	86.8	350	283	80.9	-5.9
District	2654	2552	96.2	2581	2396	92.83	-3.32

Science Participation Rates 2019-2021

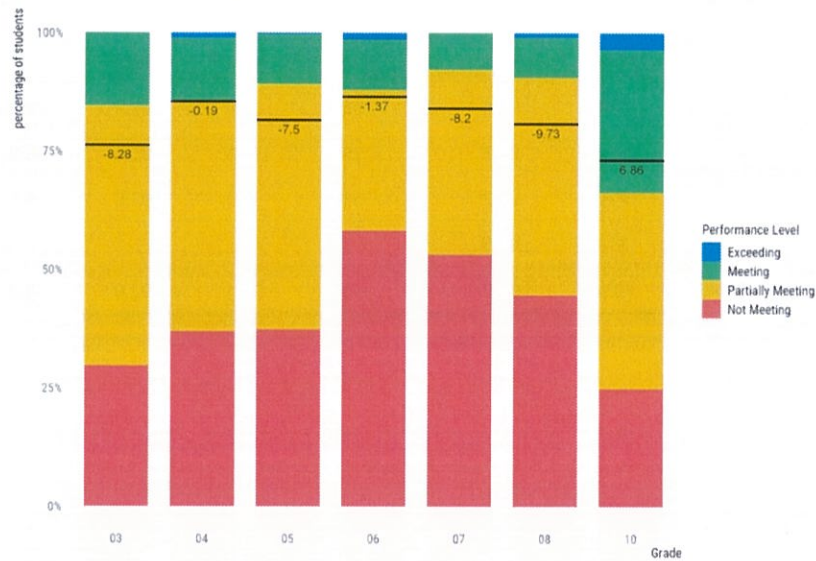
Grade	2019			2021			Rate change
	n	tested	rate	n	tested	rate	
5	399	389	97.5	366	340	92.9	-4.6
8	341	330	96.8	200	181	90.5	-6.3
5-8	740	719	97.2	566	521	92.0	-5.1
10	345	315	91.3	-	-	-	
District	1085	1034	95.3	566	521	92.0	-3.3

2. In Holyoke and state-wide, the percentage of students meeting/exceeding expectations declined in nearly every grade level and subject (Math, English, Science).

In both Holyoke and the state, the decline in the percentage of students meeting/exceeding expectations is larger overall in Math than in ELA. District-wide, the percentage of students meeting/exceeding declined 7% in Math and 5% in ELA. The decline in Math was greatest for students in grades 3, 4, 5, with 4th graders having the greatest decrease in the percentage of students meeting/exceeding expectations (- 13%). In both Holyoke and the state, the percentage of students in 10th grade meeting/exceeding expectations in ELA increased. In Holyoke, the percentage of students in grade 10 meeting/exceeding expectations in ELA increased by 7 points from 27% in 2019 to 34% in 2021, which surpassed the state increase of 3 percentage points.

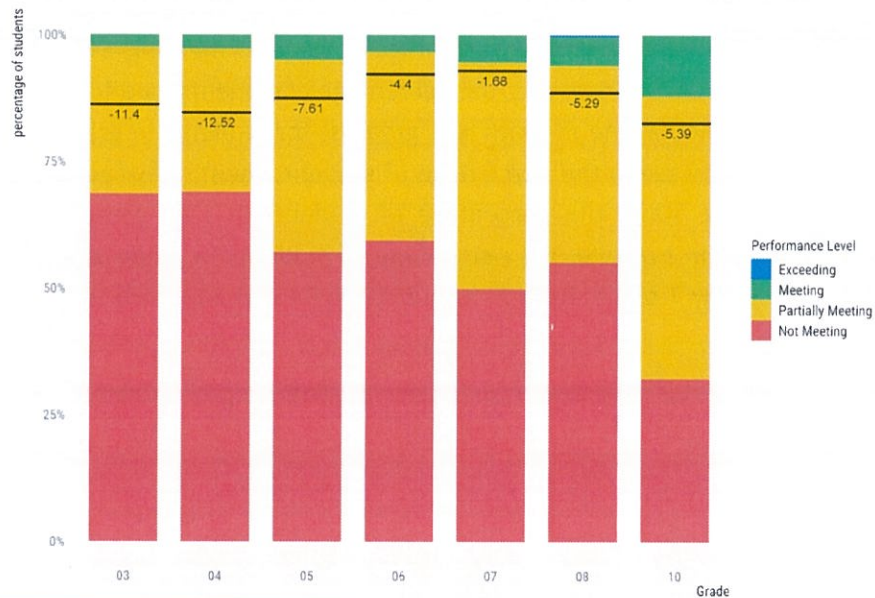
MCAS ELA 2021 Performance Levels by Grade

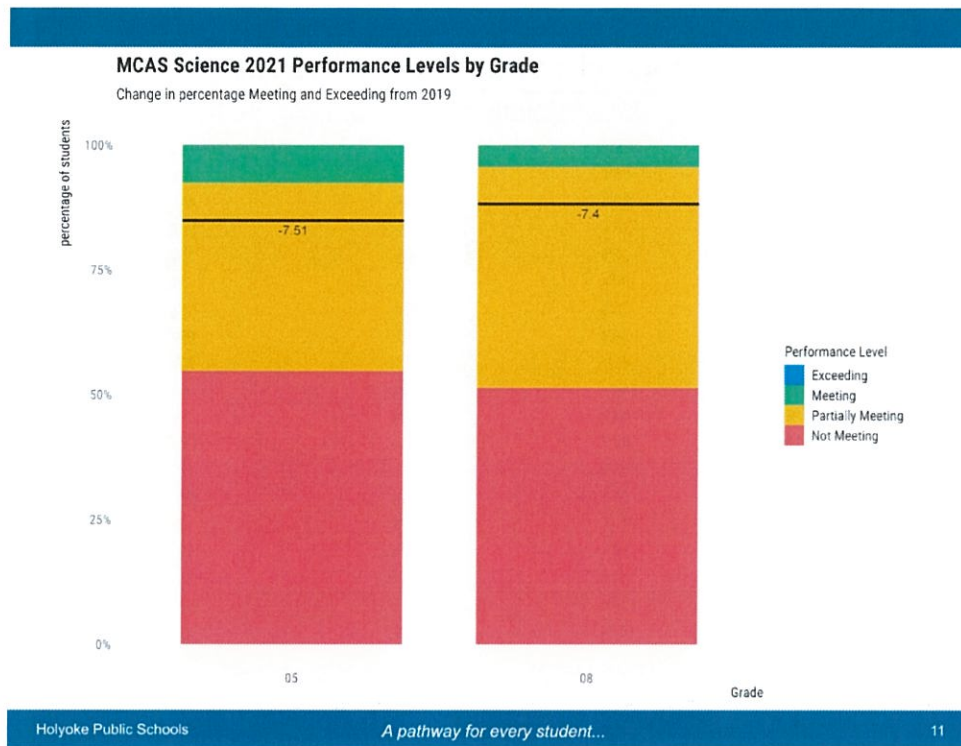
Change in percentage Meeting and Exceeding from 2019



MCAS Math 2021 Performance Levels by Grade

Change in percentage Meeting and Exceeding from 2019





3. The gap in performance between Holyoke and the State remains wide, but narrowed slightly from 2019 to 2021.

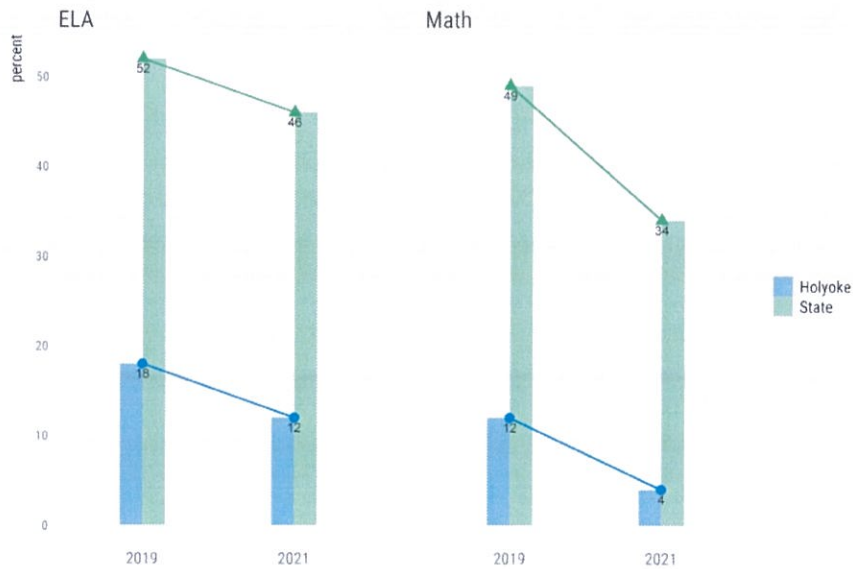
In ELA and Math, the gap between the percentage of students meeting/exceeding expectations narrowed in all but three grades: ELA in Grades 3, 5 and 7. When looking across grades 3-8, the gap between the state and Holyoke narrowed in Math (from 37% to 29%) and remained the same in ELA (34%). Although the gap narrowed, the overall level of performance continues to be very concerning.

Difference in % students Meeting & Exceeding Expectations

Grade	Test	Difference between MA and HPS		
		2019	2021	Change from 2019 to 2021
3	ELA	-32%	-36%	-4%
3	Math	-35%	-31%	4%
4	ELA	-37%	-35%	2%
4	Math	-35%	-30%	5%
5	ELA	-34%	-36%	-2%
5	Math	-35%	-28%	7%
5	Science	-34%	-34%	0%
6	ELA	-39%	-35%	4%
6	Math	-44%	-30%	14%
7	ELA	-32%	-35%	-3%
7	Math	-41%	-30%	11%
8	ELA	-33%	-32%	1%
8	Math	-35%	-26%	9%
8	Science	-34%	-37%	-3%
10	ELA	-34%	-30%	4%
10	Math	-42%	-40%	2%
3-8	ELA	-34%	-34%	0%
3-8	Math	-37%	-29%	8%
3-8	Science	-34%	-35%	-1%

Change in percentage of students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations

Grades 3-8



These results highlight the importance of our students attending school in person with their teachers and peers. HPS has been proactively planning to address the anticipated gaps identified by the MCAS as well as our internal assessments. Our [Learning Acceleration Plan](#), which was developed this summer, provides a strong foundation to support students to meet grade level expectations. It is designed to address all learners in grades PK-12. We have increased our access to strong academic coaching, Math and Reading interventionists, and a strong focus on strengthening our core instruction. Additionally, we are also developing plans to provide targeted support for students who performed in the bottom 25th percentile on MCAS to accelerate their achievement of grade level expectations.

Families will receive their child's individual MCAS report card shortly after September 30. School and district performance data can be found on [DESE's profile webpages](#) under the assessment tab. More information on [MCAS can be found on DESE's webpage](#).

COVID-19 Update

Health Metrics

Since the start of the school year on August 31st, HPS has had 164 cumulative positive cases. This includes 151 students and 13 staff members. The Total cases in the past 2 weeks include 85 students and 8 staff. The number of cases resulting in spread to another HPS student or staff is 19; 18 students and 1 staff. As of Thursday, September 23rd, the state reported that the City of Holyoke had a 49.4/100,000 avg. daily incidence rate, 5.12% positivity, 6401 tests performed in the past two weeks, and 281 positive cases city-wide in the past two weeks. There have been a total of 6467 positive cases in Holyoke.

On [Sept. 8, I sent a letter](#) to families and staff to be transparent about our COVID-19 data and to explain how we **are tightening our enhanced safety measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within our schools and to ensure a quality educational experience for all students**. Excerpts from the letter are included below. Overall, I want to remind people that it's the cumulative impact of many small actions that will keep our school communities as safe as possible.

I also want to reiterate **the most important actions that families can take to keep our children safe are to:**

- Get vaccinated (if eligible) and encourage others to do so.
- Sign your child up for the Test and Stay program.
- Remind your child to wear their mask over BOTH their nose and mouth.

The **new additions to our safety procedures** are:

- **Rugs:** Discontinue using rugs as an instructional space since it is difficult to maintain 3-feet spacing between students while on a rug.

- **Open Houses:** Out of an abundance of caution, all Open Houses will be virtual events for families, with staff in-person at the school.
- **Adult meetings and 6 feet distancing:** Host remote meetings when possible and reserve in-person meetings for times when adults can be 6-feet apart and being in-person dramatically increases the effectiveness of the meeting.
- Please note, by the end of the week, we will send **an at-home instructional plan for students** who need to quarantine due to a positive case or other long term absence/illness.

These are **safety procedures to reinforce:**

- **Vaccinations:** We strongly encourage all eligible people ages 12+ to get the COVID-19 vaccine, which is the best way to protect against serious illness due to COVID. Our children, especially those who are less than 12 years old and not eligible for the vaccine, are safer when the vaccination rate of our community is higher. More information, including how to get a vaccine, can be found on our vaccine [webpage](#). We also encourage you to get the flu vaccine.
- **COVID-19 testing in school:** We strongly encourage all HPS students and staff to sign up for our testing program, which includes weekly surveillance testing, rapid testing for symptomatic people, and the Test and Stay program, which allows asymptomatic individuals who were identified as close contacts at school to remain in school as long as they are asymptomatic, testnegative, and self-monitor through day 14. Visit our HPS COVID Testing [Website](#) to find out more about our program and register to be part of this initiative. Families can opt into COVID Safety Checks for their students [here](#). Staff can opt into COVID Safety Checks [here](#).
- **At least 3-feet of distance between all students:** We are removing unnecessary furniture in classrooms and ensuring that students working collaboratively at tables are 3-feet apart.
- **Seating Charts:** Seating charts are essential tools for effective contact tracing and must be used in all situations: core classes, specials, lunch, intervention and pull-out groups.
- **Masks:** Teachers and staff need to consistently respond to every student who is not covering BOTH mouth and nose with their masks. In national studies, breaches in mask wearing have been shown to contribute to spread in schools.
- And all our other safety measures, including staying home when sick; proper air filtration through air scrubbers and opening windows; handwashing; contact tracing; enhanced cleaning; and limiting visitors.

Entry Plan Update

As you know, I released my [Entry Plan on September 1](#). The ultimate purpose of the entry plan is for me to build a deeper understanding of our district in order to set a clear path forward for our community that is inclusive of input from all stakeholders. Throughout this process, I also strive to live according to my core beliefs and hope that the people I meet with can see evidence of these beliefs in action.

- **Students are first and foremost.**
- **Every child can and will learn.**

- **School is about more than academics.**
- **It takes a village (to raise a child).**

I have begun to meet with individuals, small groups and larger groups to solicit input on our school district. Below are the questions that I ask. Although we don't always get to every question, I make sure to cover 1, 2, and 5.

1. What are the **strengths and successes** of our school district?
2. What are the **challenges and areas for growth** within our district?
3. How do we ensure that **every student is prepared for success after they graduate** from HPS?
4. Aligned to my belief that "it takes a village," **how can we work better together** in support of student success?
5. What would you like to **see from me as your Superintendent?**
6. What else do you think it's **important for me to know?**

I am eager to meet with the School Committee at our December retreat in order to solicit your input on these questions. I would also encourage you to complete the input survey (to be released in October) to attend any of our upcoming public forums. Please encourage families, students, friends, colleagues, and neighbors to take the survey and attend the events as well. All voices are important!

- Virtual Community Partners and Community Members Meeting: Tuesday, Sept. 22, 9:30-10:45 a.m. (COMPLETED)
- In-Person Meeting for All at Heritage Park: Tuesday, Oct. 12, 5-6:15 p.m. (Rain date: Tuesday, Oct. 19, 5:00 - 6:15 p.m.)
- Virtual Staff Meeting: Tuesday, Nov. 2, 3:30-4:30 p.m.
- Virtual Family Meeting: Wednesday, Oct. 20, 5:30-6:45 p.m.
- Virtual Family Leadership Groups Meeting: Wednesday, Oct. 6, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Stakeholders can sign up to be a part of the [listening sessions here.](#)

I also want to thank the students and staff at Metcalf, Sullivan and E.N. White for already hosting me for classroom visits, staff focus groups and student focus groups. One of the students from Metcalf was the daughter of someone I used to play baseball with! The staff at Sullivan highlighted the district's programs to support paraprofessionals to become licensed teachers as being greatly helpful to increasing the diversity of our teaching workforce, although people have highlighted the need to increase staff retention across the board.

I expect to have a draft entry plan findings report by early 2021 and will utilize the springtime to collaboratively develop a strategic plan for our district.

Annual Planning & Goals

The district's current strategic plan has a solid foundation in the turnaround plan, and the HPS leadership team has been iterating on this plan over the past few years. The SY21-22 is the continuation of previous planning efforts, and after my entry planning, we will emerge together with a multiyear strategic plan, in alignment with the turnaround plan. A two-page graphic explaining the [SY21-22 strategic plan](#) is available on our website; see the red buttons in English and Spanish to the right of the webpage.

Holyoke Public Schools' four strategic priorities are essential for the district to achieve its vision of "A Pathway for Every Student."

The strategic priorities are centered around each school having the resources, support and focus needed to develop and implement a highly effective School Improvement Plan. All schools have engaged in a rigorous and reflective planning process to develop unique school improvement plans, designed to support students academically, behaviorally, and social-emotionally. Our students will graduate prepared to excel in college, career, and community leadership.

SY21-22 Strategic Objectives

- Use district-approved core curriculum to ensure all students receive strong core instruction,
- Ensure all grades K-8 students placed in Tier 2/3 support receive targeted intervention and make 1.5 year's growth on STAR.
- Analyze data from the assessment plan through data team cycles to accelerate student learning.

Strategic Priorities, Goals, and Actions

TEACHING & LEARNING

Goal: Dramatically increase reading, math, and science proficiency for all students.

Select Actions:

- Strengthen the implementation of instructional strategies to support multilingual learners.
- Complete a Literacy audit to inform the creation of a three-year Literacy improvement plan.
- Plan and support the implementation of PK-2 literacy-based Science curriculum.
- Increase the number of PK-8 schools that have access to and implement STMath.
- Provide and administer interim assessments aligned to core curriculum.
- Develop a process and support school leaders to monitor core and intervention curriculum implementation.
- Ensure that students identified in the bottom 25th percentile receive systematic interventions in ELA and Math based on their needs.

SUPPORTING THE WHOLE CHILD

Goal: Meet the academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs of students.

Select Actions:

- Support principals in the implementation of student supports, including the new social-emotional curriculum.
- Continue the plan to move towards distinct elementary and middle schools.
- Create a technology-rich environment and recover from the loss to district technology from last school year.
- Ensure schools and departments have real-time access to budgets.
- Re-bid a new 5-year food services contract to focus on higher quality, culturally relevant, tasty food.

FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Goal: Empower families to work with schools to meet their children's needs.

Select Actions:

- Strengthen School Councils to engage families as active partners in their child's learning.
- Continue to strengthen translation and interpretation services.
- Improve the family and school transportation experience by improving the bus routing system.

SHARED LEARNING & LEADERSHIP

GOAL: Staff grow and learn to achieve exceptional results for all students.

Select Actions:

- Develop school leaders to implement systems for observation and feedback and weekly data meetings with classroom teachers.
- Plan and implement an inclusive hiring process.
- Support educators to earn and maintain appropriate licensure/endorsement.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of all teacher recruitment programs.
- Strengthen the professional learning of special education teachers and IEP teams.

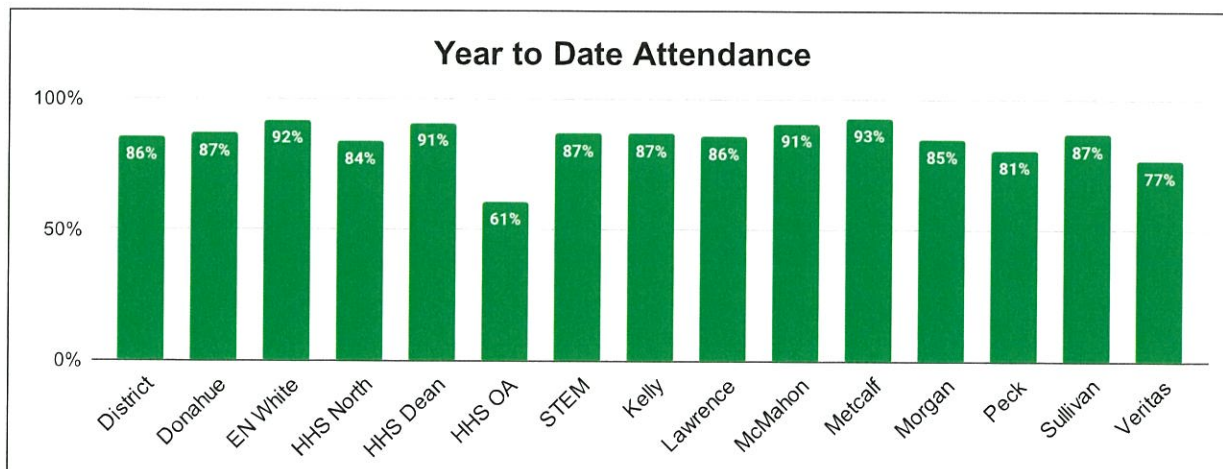
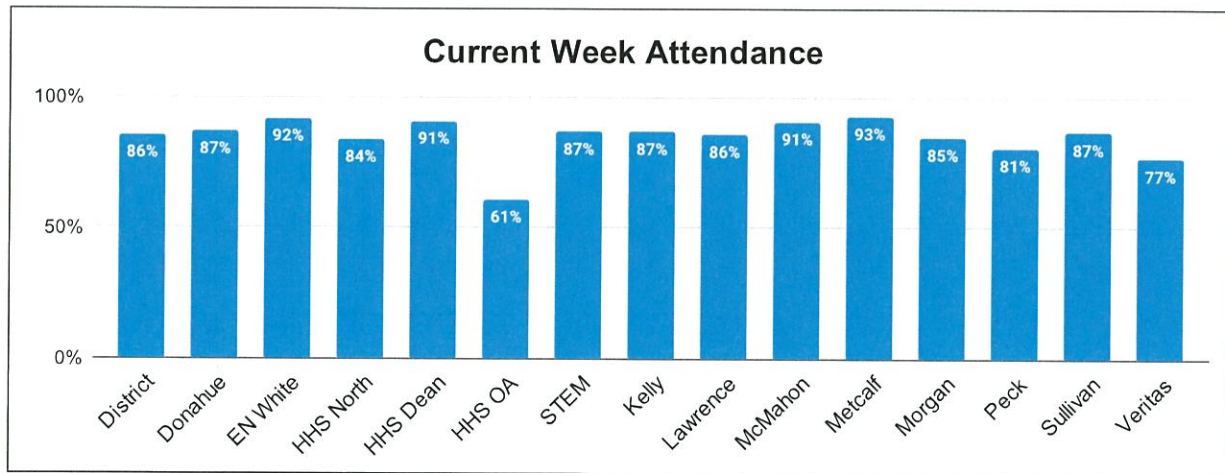
APPENDIX

Attendance Rates, 8/23-8/27

Includes Gr. K-12

School	YTD Average	Current Week Summary					
		Week Avg.	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
District	85.6%	85.6%	80.8%	86.6%	87.7%	87.6%	85.3%
Donahue	87%	87%	79%	88%	91%	89%	86%
EN White	92%	92%	90%	93%	93%	92%	91%
HHS North	84%	84%	83%	80%	85%	86%	84%
HHS Dean	91%	91%	84%	89%	94%	93%	92%
HHS OA	61%	61%	57%	67%	65%	58%	56%
STEM	87%	87%	81%	90%	88%	89%	89%
Kelly	87%	87%	82%	90%	90%	89%	83%
Lawrence	86%	86%	78%	89%	86%	91%	89%
McMahon	91%	91%	89%	95%	93%	93%	88%
Metcalf	93%	93%	92%	96%	93%	93%	94%
Morgan	85%	85%	76%	86%	88%	90%	87%
Peck	81%	81%	74%	85%	82%	82%	82%
Sullivan	87%	87%	81%	90%	89%	91%	86%
Veritas	77%	77%	67%	81%	81%	79%	76%

*OA Attendance reflects Success Center Students only; Gateway/Lighthouse attendance not yet entered.



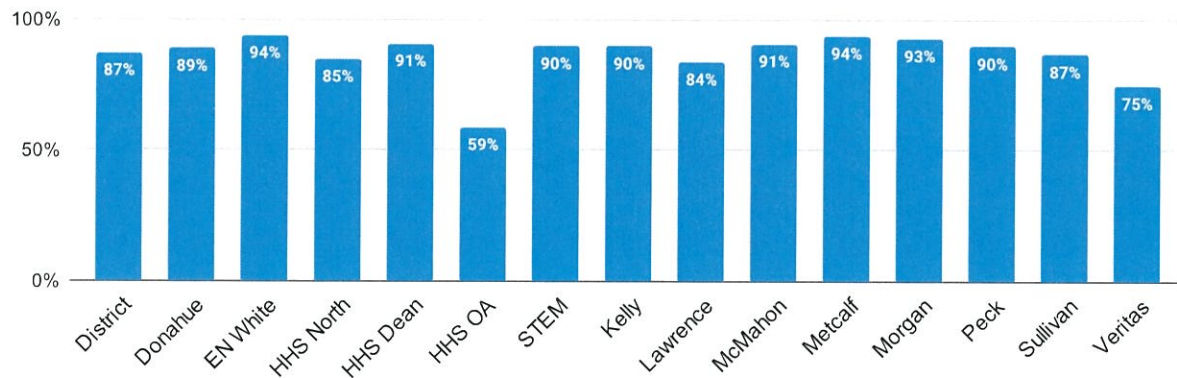
Attendance Rates, 8/30-9/3

Includes Gr. K-12

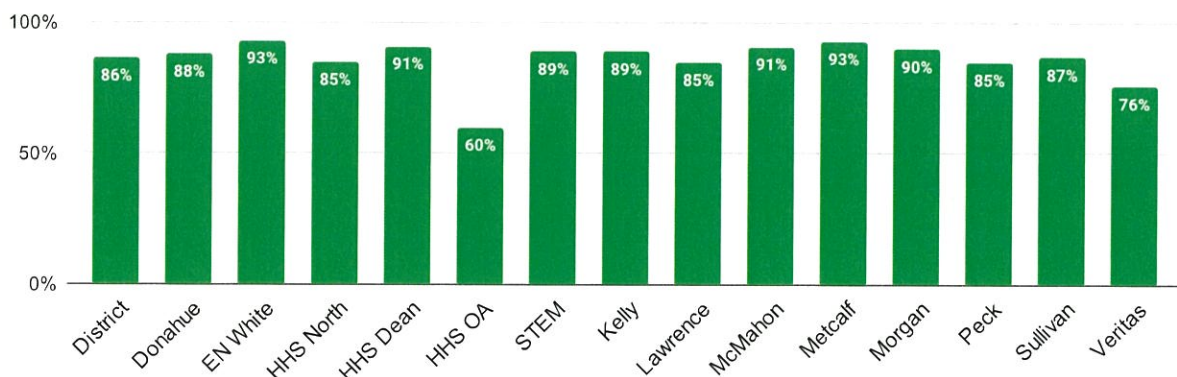
School	YTD Average	Current Week Summary					
		Week Avg.	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
District	86.4%	87.3%	87.4%	88.5%	87.4%	86.2%	86.7%
Donahue	88%	89%	89%	91%	90%	89%	88%
EN White	93%	94%	94%	94%	94%	93%	93%
HHS North	85%	85%	83%	86%	87%	85%	87%
HHS Dean	91%	91%	95%	93%	91%	87%	91%
HHS OA	60%	59%	60%	58%	62%	57%	57%
STEM	89%	90%	87%	90%	92%	91%	90%
Kelly	89%	90%	92%	92%	91%	89%	88%
Lawrence	85%	84%	90%	89%	84%	79%	77%
McMahon	91%	91%	90%	92%	92%	93%	89%
Metcalf	93%	94%	93%	95%	93%	95%	93%
Morgan	90%	93%	92%	95%	92%	92%	95%
Peck	85%	90%	92%	92%	87%	89%	88%
Sullivan	87%	87%	88%	89%	85%	85%	88%
Veritas	76%	75%	78%	76%	75%	74%	75%

*OA Attendance reflects Success Center Students only; Gateway/Lighthouse attendance not yet entered.

Current Week Attendance



Year to Date Attendance



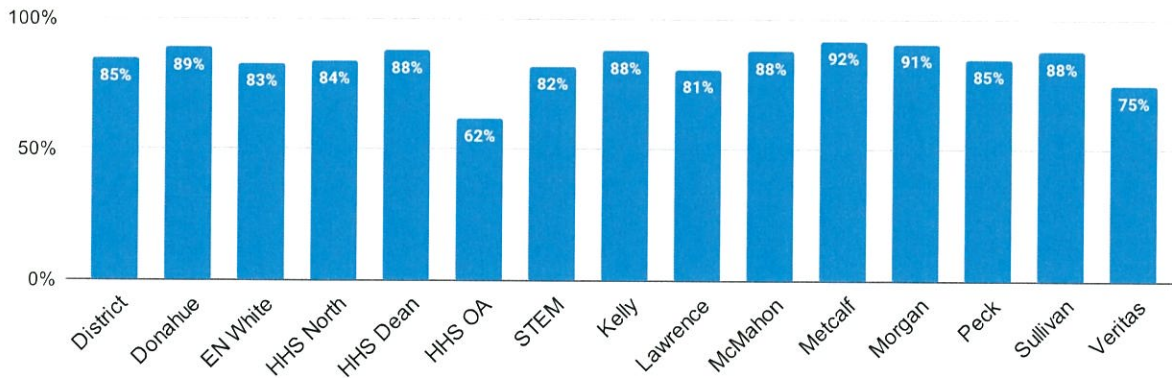
Attendance Rates, 9/6-9/10

Includes Gr. K-12

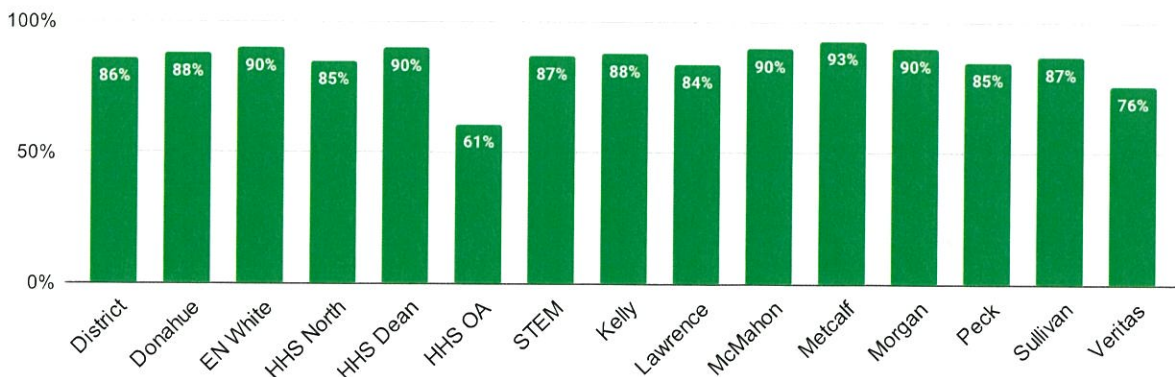
School	YTD Average	Current Week Summary					
		Week Avg.	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
District	86.0%	84.8%	No School	85.8%	85.1%	84.8%	83.5%
Donahue	88%	89%		90%	89%	90%	88%
EN White	90%	83%		86%	84%	81%	82%
HHS North	85%	84%		84%	85%	85%	83%
HHS Dean	90%	88%		88%	87%	89%	86%
HHS OA	61%	62%		64%	65%	71%	57%
STEM	87%	82%		87%	83%	78%	79%
Kelly	88%	88%		86%	89%	89%	87%
Lawrence	84%	81%		83%	79%	80%	80%
McMahon	90%	88%		90%	87%	88%	87%
Metcalf	93%	92%		89%	93%	96%	92%
Morgan	90%	91%		94%	92%	91%	86%
Peck	85%	85%		91%	86%	84%	79%
Sullivan	87%	88%		87%	90%	89%	89%
Veritas	76%	75%		78%	72%	73%	77%

*OA Attendance reflects Success Center Students only; Gateway/Lighthouse attendance not yet entered.

Current Week Attendance

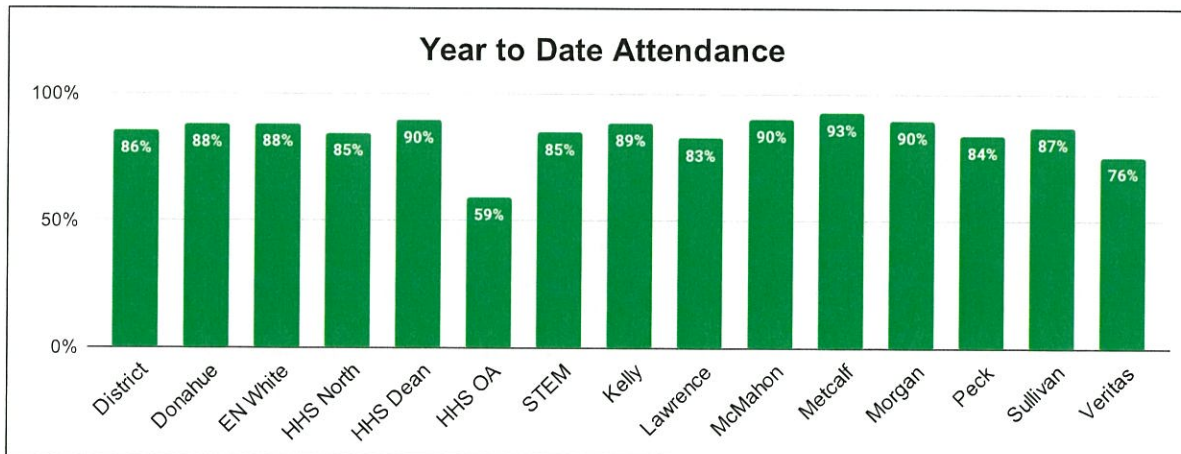
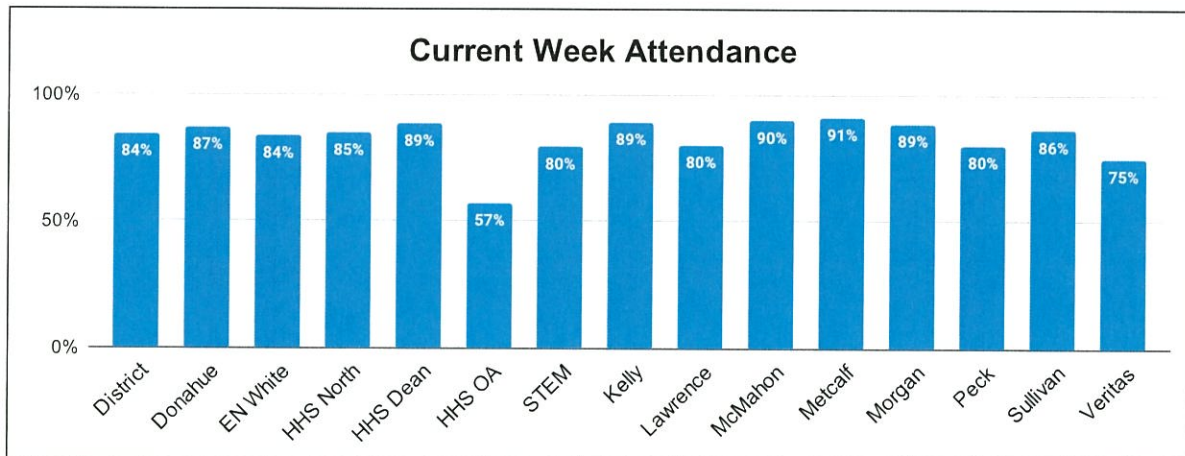


Year to Date Attendance



Attendance Rates, 9/13-9/17							
Includes Gr. K-12							
School	YTD Average	Current Week Summary					
		Week Avg.	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
District	85.5%	84.4%	84.2%	85.1%	85.4%	84.0%	83.4%
Donahue	88%	87%	89%	86%	89%	87%	85%
EN White	88%	84%	83%	86%	86%	84%	80%
HHS North	85%	85%	85%	85%	87%	84%	84%
HHS Dean	90%	89%	89%	91%	89%	88%	87%
HHS OA	59%	57%	56%	60%	60%	58%	53%
STEM	85%	80%	80%	78%	80%	82%	77%
Kelly	89%	89%	88%	91%	89%	89%	90%
Lawrence	83%	80%	77%	82%	79%	82%	82%
McMahon	90%	90%	92%	89%	91%	90%	88%
Metcalf	93%	91%	92%	93%	91%	88%	93%
Morgan	90%	89%	88%	93%	88%	87%	88%
Peck	84%	80%	84%	83%	81%	79%	76%
Sullivan	87%	86%	84%	88%	89%	84%	87%
Veritas	76%	75%	74%	73%	77%	76%	76%

*OA Attendance reflects Success Center Students only; Gateway/Lighthouse attendance not yet entered.



Note: Data is current as of Monday 9/20 at 10AM and is subject to change as adjustments to attendance are made; Veritas data updated 9/21.

Learning Support Plan for Students who test positive for COVID or are required to quarantine Fall 2021 Guidance

Context: Holyoke Public Schools will implement a “[Test and Stay](#)” program to minimize the need to quarantine students. However, in the event that a child tests positive for COVID-19, they must isolate per doctor’s order and cannot attend school for 10 calendar days. Additionally, if a family does not consent to participate in the “Test and Stay” program, a student who is a close contact will need to be quarantined for 7 calendar days from the point of exposure. As a result, HPS will be prepared to academically support students who must isolate but are healthy enough to continue to learn.

This guidance will **only** apply in the event of a mandated isolation for a positive COVID-19 case initiated by an HPS school nurse and in accordance with our current [COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines/Procedures](#). If students are absent due to other illnesses for a period of time less than 7 days, they will be provided make-up work as they would in any other given school year.

If students are required, by their physician, to be out of school for longer periods of time (14 days or longer) due to severe health needs (for any medical reason including but not limited to COVID-19) appropriate learning support will be provided once a [Physician's Affirmation of Need for Temporary Home of Hospital Education for Medically Necessary Reasons](#) form is completed and provided to the district. In rare circumstances, some special education students may require a home/hospital learning program for more than 60 school days. Please refer to the information linked [here](#).

Expectations: In the event a student is feeling well enough to learn but is not permitted to attend school due to required isolation as a result of a positive COVID-19 case, HPS will provide the student remote access to learning. The 2021 school year is opening with full in-person learning, therefore, access is defined as ensuring the student has electronic access to learning resources. For the purpose of this remote learning period, HPS is prioritizing daily social-emotional wellness check-ins and learning opportunities, in at least ELA and Math, for every student who is well enough to learn during the required isolation period. Efforts will be made to provide English Learners with limited English ESL instructional support resources and access to a bilingual staff member from their school. Additionally, every effort will be made for students who receive special education services to have access to instructional support materials.

Below are the expectations for educators and school staff who are providing remote access to learning:

	Elementary (K-8)	Secondary (9-12)
Access to Instruction	<p>Students will be able to access class assignments through either: Google Classroom, the Clever Portal, or Class DOJO.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• School Leaders will ensure that the student receives a functioning Chromebook or other approved electronic device (ex: iPads for VILS schools and for PK and K students) by the 2nd day of absence.• Teachers are required to update classroom assignments within 2 days of the student's absence.• At a minimum all students in grades K-8	<p>Students will be able to access class assignments through Google Classroom:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• School Leaders will ensure that the student receives a functioning Chromebook by the 2nd day of absence.• Teachers are required to update Google Classroom within 2 days of students' absence to ensure it is up to date for student access.• Teachers will be sure to set up remote access to their office hour session via Zoom for any student requiring remote access to learning as outlined above.• At a minimum all students in grades 9-12

	<p>absent for COVID illness or quarantine should be assigned the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ST Math: At least 20 minutes/day for Grades 2-8 and 15 min/day for Grades PK-1 ○ 20 minutes daily on Lexia Core 5/PowerUp, Imagine Learning/iStation ○ Read for at least 20 mins daily and complete a reading log (teacher determined format). 	<p>absent for COVID-19 illness or quarantine should be assigned the following work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In addition to giving their best to class assignments, students can also do the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Grades 9 and 10 can complete practice problems for the Math and ELA MCAS exams, found at this link ○ Grade 12 students can begin to work on college essays and applications for post-secondary programs ○ Grade 11 and 12 students can complete practice problems for the SAT and AP exams ○ Grade 9-12 students can complete 60 minutes of independent reading daily
Personal Connection	<p>The school's counseling and FACE staff will coordinate to connect with the students or family daily via Zoom or phone calls. Check-ins will be approximately 10 minutes, depending upon the circumstances and caseloads. FACE coordinators and school and adjustment counselors will set regular and repeating times in their schedules for these check-ins, and should use the zoom meeting function where possible. Check-ins are used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do a quick social-emotional (SEL)/Wellness check-in with the student or family ● Ensure students have access to the necessary materials/assignments ● Support families of younger students in understanding how to support their child/children with the assignments ● If more than 1 student in the same age range, class or grade band is absent due to COVID-19, the counselor(s) may hold small group zoom SEL sessions as opposed to individual sessions. 	
Technology Supports	<p>The school will issue a functioning grade-level-appropriate device (iPad or Chromebook) to the student. School staff must follow the Student Device Inventory Policy when issuing a device to any student. If during the course of the remote access, the device malfunctions, the device can be exchanged for another one at the school. Teachers will provide access to instruction primarily through Google Classroom and Clever but may also use school specific programs such as Class DOJO.</p> <p>IT will ensure all educators have access to necessary platforms such as Google Workspace, Zoom, Clever, etc.</p> <p>Families who were provided internet access through support from HPS last year should still have the same access. If support is still needed, contact the school's Tech Lead or Dean of Management and Operations.</p>	



Mr. Anthony Soto, Superintendent/Receiver

September 8, 2021

Dear Families and Staff,

While the start of the school year has been a positive experience for many, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact us. This has caused feelings of stress or anxiety for some families, students and staff. Based on feedback, our experience in the last two weeks and the health trends in Holyoke, **we are tightening our enhanced safety measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within our schools and to ensure a quality educational experience for all students.** Please read [below](#) for a more detailed list.

We want to be fully transparent with you about our COVID data. We also update our [health metrics data on our website](#) weekly. Since the start of school on Monday, August 23:

- Days of School: 12
- # of COVID cases: 57 (52 students, 5 staff)
- # of cases resulting in spread to another HPS student/staff: 2
- # of cases involving hospitalization: 0. No admissions reported.

I also want to reiterate **the most important actions that families can take to keep our children safe are:**

- Get vaccinated (if eligible) and encourage others to do so.
- Sign your child up for the Test to Stay program.
- Remind your child to wear their mask over BOTH their nose and mouth.

The **new additions to our safety procedures** are:

- **Rugs:** Discontinue using rugs as an instructional space since it is difficult to maintain 3-feet spacing between students while on a rug.
- **Open Houses:** Out of an abundance of caution, all Open Houses will be virtual events for families, with staff in-person at the school.
- **Adult meetings and 6 feet distancing:** Host remote meetings when possible and reserve in-person meetings for times when adults can be 6-feet apart and being in-person dramatically increases the effectiveness of the meeting.
- Please note, by the end of the week, we will send **an at-home instructional plan for students** who need to quarantine due to a positive case.

These are **safety procedures to reinforce:**

- **Vaccinations:** We strongly encourage all eligible people ages 12+ to get the COVID-19 vaccine, which is the best way to protect against serious illness due to COVID. Our children, especially those who are less than 12 years old and not eligible for the vaccine, are safer when the

vaccination rate of our community is higher. More information, including how to get a vaccine, can be found on our vaccine [webpage](#). We also encourage you to get the flu vaccine.

- **COVID-19 testing in school:** We strongly encourage all HPS students and staff to sign up for testing program, which includes weekly surveillance testing, rapid testing for symptomatic people, and the Test to Stay program, which allows asymptomatic individuals who were identified as close contacts at school to remain in school as long as they are negative. Visit our HPS COVID Testing [Website](#) to find out more about our program and register to be part of this initiative. Families can opt into COVID Safety Checks for their students [here](#). Staff can opt into COVID Safety Checks [here](#).
- **At least 3-feet of distance between all students:** We are removing unnecessary furniture in classrooms and ensuring that students working collaboratively at tables are 3-feet apart.
- **Seating Charts:** Seating charts are essential tools for effective contact tracing and must be used in all situations: core classes, specials, lunch, intervention and pull-out groups.
- **Masks:** Teachers and staff need to consistently respond to every student who slips in covering BOTH mouth and nose with their masks. In national studies, breaches in mask wearing have been shown to contribute to spread in schools.
- And all our other safety measures, including staying home when sick; proper air filtration through air scrubbers and opening windows; handwashing; contact tracing; enhanced cleaning; and limiting visitors.

Thank you for continuing to do everything you can to follow our layered approach to safety laid out in our [return to school plan](#) so that we can have as many students as possible healthy and able to learn in person. School is a safe place for our children to be. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) shares: "Multiple studies have shown that transmission within school settings is typically lower than – or at least similar to – levels of community transmission, when prevention strategies are in place in schools." Remember, it's the cumulative impact of many small actions that will keep our school communities as safe as possible.

Stay safe,



Anthony Soto
Receiver/Superintendent

Mr. Anthony Soto, Receptor/Superintendente

8 de septiembre de 2021

Estimadas familias y personal,

Si bien el comienzo del año escolar ha sido una experiencia positiva para muchos, la pandemia de COVID-19 continúa afectándonos. Esto ha causado sentimientos de estrés o ansiedad para algunas familias, estudiantes y personal. Basándonos en los comentarios, nuestra experiencia en las últimas dos semanas y las tendencias de salud en Holyoke, estamos reforzando nuestras medidas de seguridad para mitigar la propagación de COVID-19 dentro de nuestras escuelas y para asegurar una experiencia educativa de calidad para todos los estudiantes. Por favor, lea a continuación una lista más detallada.

Queremos ser totalmente transparentes con usted sobre nuestros datos de COVID. También actualizamos los datos de las métricas de salud en nuestro sitio web semanalmente. Desde el comienzo de la escuela el lunes 23 de agosto:

- Días de clase: 12
- Número de casos de COVID: 57 (52 estudiantes, 4 personal)
- Número de casos que han dado lugar a un contagio a otro estudiante/personal de HPS: 2
- Número de casos con hospitalización: 0. No se han notificado admisiones.

También quiero reiterar **que las acciones más importantes que las familias pueden tomar para mantener a nuestros hijos seguros son:**

- Vacunarse (si se puede) y animar a otros a hacerlo.
- Inscriba a su hijo en el programa "Test to Stay".
- Recuerde a su hijo que debe llevar la mascarilla tanto en la nariz como en la boca.

Las **nuevas incorporaciones a nuestros procedimientos de seguridad** son:

- **Alfombras:** Descontinuar el uso de alfombras como espacio de instrucción ya que es difícil mantener un espacio de 3 pies entre los estudiantes mientras están en una alfombra.
- **Casas abiertas:** Por precaución, todas las casas abiertas serán eventos virtuales para las familias, con el personal presencial en la escuela.
- **Reuniones de adultos y distanciamiento de 6 pies:** Organice reuniones a distancia cuando sea posible y reserve las reuniones presenciales para los momentos en los que los adultos puedan estar a 6 pies de distancia y el estar en persona aumente drásticamente la eficacia de la reunión.

Estos son **procedimientos de seguridad que hay que reforzar**:

- **Vacunación:** Recomendamos encarecidamente a todas las personas de más de 12 años que reúnan los requisitos para vacunarse contra el COVID-19, qué es la mejor manera de protegerse contra las enfermedades graves debido al COVID. Nuestros niños, especialmente los que tienen menos de 12 años y no son elegibles para la vacuna, están más seguros cuando la tasa de vacunación de nuestra comunidad es más alta. Puede encontrar más información, incluyendo cómo vacunarse, en nuestra [página web](#) sobre vacunas. También le animamos a que se vacune contra la gripe.
- **Prueba de COVID-19 en la escuela:** Alentamos firmemente a todos los estudiantes y al personal de HPS a que se inscriban en el programa de pruebas, que incluye pruebas de vigilancia semanales, pruebas rápidas para personas sintomáticas y el programa "Test to Stay", que permite que las personas asintomáticas que fueron identificadas como contactos cercanos en la escuela permanezcan en la escuela mientras sean negativas. Visite nuestro [sitio web](#) de pruebas COVID de HPS para obtener más información sobre nuestro programa y registrarse para formar parte de esta iniciativa. Las familias pueden optar por los Controles de Seguridad COVID para sus estudiantes [aquí](#). El personal puede optar por los controles de seguridad COVID [aquí](#).
- **Al menos 3 pies de distancia entre todos los estudiantes:** Estamos eliminando los muebles innecesarios en los salones de clases y asegurando que los estudiantes que trabajan en colaboración en las mesas están a 3 pies de distancia.
- **Tablas de distribución de asientos:** Las tablas de asientos son herramientas esenciales para el seguimiento efectivo de los contactos y deben ser utilizadas en todas las situaciones: clases básicas, especiales, almuerzo, intervención y grupos de extracción.
- **Mascarillas:** Los maestros y el personal deben responder sistemáticamente a todos los estudiantes que fallan al cubrir TANTO la boca como la nariz con sus mascarillas. En estudios nacionales, se ha demostrado que los incumplimientos en el uso de mascarillas contribuyen a la propagación en las escuelas.
- Y todas las demás medidas de seguridad, como quedarse en casa cuando se está enfermo, filtrar el aire adecuadamente mediante depuradores y abrir las ventanas, lavarse las manos, rastrear los contactos, mejorar la limpieza y limitar las visitas.

Gracias por continuar haciendo todo lo posible para seguir nuestro enfoque de seguridad por niveles establecidos en nuestro [plan de regreso a la escuela](#) para que podamos tener el mayor número posible de estudiantes sanos y capaces de aprender en persona. La escuela es un lugar seguro para nuestros niños. Los [Centros para el Control y la Prevención de Enfermedades \(CDC\)](#) comparten: "Estudios múltiples han demostrado que la transmisión dentro de los entornos escolares es típicamente más baja que - o al menos similar a - los niveles de transmisión en la comunidad, cuando las estrategias de prevención están en marcha en las escuelas." Recuerde, es el impacto acumulativo de muchas pequeñas acciones lo que mantendrá a nuestras comunidades escolares tan seguras como sea posible.

Manténgase seguro,



Anthony Soto