

# Medfield Public Schools Office of the Superintendent Fall 2021 Opening Plan

**April 26, 2022**

Previous Version: October 26, 2021

Previous Version: August 27, 2021

Previous Version: September 3, 2021

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

Over the past school year, Medfield Public Schools has significantly evolved to a pre-pandemic environment, one that continues to support teaching and learning for all students within a safe and supportive environment. This updated 2021-2022 Plan reflects the many shifts that occurred since the Fall and highlights ways we will continue to ensure a successful school year.

## **2021-2022 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 close to two years 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 high vaccination rates at all levels in our district, allowed for a full return to a safe in-person school experience for all students in September, 2021. The initial return to school looked 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'). Since February, 2022<sup>1</sup> Medfield Public Schools has shifted to a Mask Optional environment- one that acknowledges each family's own unique circumstances and respects students, faculty, and staff for their choice whether or not to wear a mask. These policies are concurrent with other Medfield Public School-sponsored health and safety protocols including the distribution of antigen testing kits, containing two tests, to all students, faculty, and staff every other week as well as our pooled testing program (see 'Health and Safety').

**School Start and End Times-** This year, each school returned 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

---

<sup>1</sup> On February 10, 2022, the Medfield School Committee voted to adopt a Mask Optional policy. As such, masks became optional at Medfield High School as of 2/14/22. In grades PK-Grade 8, masks became optional as of 2/28/22.

- PreK- Two Day PM- 12:15 - 2:45

**Transportation-** Bus transportation is provided for all students that meet the distance requirements. Federal regulations regarding masking are no longer in effect, therefore all bus transportation is Mask Optional as of February 28, 2022.

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 returned to those in place before the pandemic.

**School Lunches-** 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.

## 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 April 26, 2022, 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.
- In December 2021, Medfield High School was granted a waiver authorizing it to adopt a Mask Optional Policy. This policy was adopted by the Medfield School Committee and went into effect as of February 14, 2022.
- In February 2021, Governor Charlie Baker along with Commissioner of Education Jeffrey Reilly announced that the state school mask mandate would expire on February 28, 2022 and not be renewed. Subsequently, the Medfield School Committee voted to adopt a PK-8 Mask Optional policy, effective February 28, 2022.
- As of February 25, 2022, [the CDC no longer requires masks to be worn on school busses](#). However, the district supports any student who chooses to wear a mask.

## 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 Statewide School Mask Requirement Changes \(2/9/22\)](#), [DESE's Weekly At-Home Test Availability \(1/18/22\)](#), and guidance from [Medfield Board of Health](#), the Medfield Public Schools physician, and the Medfield school nurses. In addition, parent input provides ongoing 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.

**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 infection. This year, students from kindergarten through grade 12 are eligible to participate. The pooled testing program commenced in mid-September and will continue, as needed, throughout this school year

**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. 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.

**Antigen Test Kit Distribution-** In addition to the strategies articulated above, on February 1, 2022, Superintendent Marsden announced that antigen test kits are available for all faculty, staff and students' home use. In this opt-in program, kits containing two tests are distributed every other week so that faculty, staff, and students' families can test on a bi-weekly basis. It is anticipated that this DESE-sponsored program will conclude by April 30, 2022.

**Vaccination Rates-** Overall, vaccination rates in Medfield, both its eligible student aged population and the community-at-large, are above the averages in both Norfolk County and the [Commonwealth](#).

**Medfield, Norfolk County, and Massachusetts Vaccination Rates- Full Vaccination  
(4/14/22)**

Medfield Population	% eligible population fully vaccinated
Age 5-11	>95%
Age 12-15	>95%
Age 16-19	>95%
Overall	>95%
Norfolk County Population	% eligible population fully vaccinated
Overall	79%
Massachusetts Population	% eligible population fully vaccinated
Overall	78.6%

Sources: [Massachusetts Weekly Covid-19 Vaccination Report \(4/14/22\)](#); [Massachusetts Weekly Covid-19 Municipality Covid-19 Data \(4/14/22\)](#); [Mayo Clinic US Covid-19 Tracker \(04/18/22\)](#)

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 relatively low rates of COVID-19 infections. 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 March 3, 2022**  
**Data reported from the Department of Public Health**

	<b>Medfield</b>	<b>Dover</b>	<b>Millis</b>	<b>Walpole</b>	<b>Westwood</b>
<i>Total Cases</i>	<b>1588</b>	686	1110	5162	2574
<i>Two Week Case Count</i>	<b>26</b>	13	7	49	32
<i>Average Daily Incidence Rate/100K Over 14 Days</i>	<b>16.5</b>	18.1	6.4	13.4	15.6
<i>Total Tests</i>	<b>53,996</b>	27,202	27,202	107,143	70,482
<i>Total Tests (Last 14 Days)</i>	<b>859</b>	398	436	546	1,125
<i>Percent Positivity Over Last 14 Days</i>	<b>3.14%</b>	3.27%	1.83%	3.71%	3.02%

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

**Quarantining-** Those who test positive for Covid must self isolate for a minimum of 5 days from onset of symptoms (day 0) or date of positive test if asymptomatic. Individuals may return to school after five days once they have been fever-free for 24 hours (without taking any

fever-reducing medications), and experience improvement in other symptoms; or receive clearance from a health care provider. They must wear a mask on day 6-10 when around others except when eating or outside.

Symptomatic individuals who test negative for COVID-19 may return to school if they have been fever-free for 24 hours (without taking any fever-reducing medications) and received a negative COVID-19 test result (Antigen or PCR). Parents/guardians should contact the school nurse and principal if their student tests positive.

**Additional details regarding Medfield Public Schools' Quarantine protocols are contained in the [MPS COVID Illness and Testing Guidelines \(2/3/22\)](#).**

**Close Contacts-** As of 1/24/22, with the initiation of our new at home testing option with test kits provided by the state, contact tracing is no longer being done at school. Therefore, close contacts are not being identified. At the elementary level, classroom letters are sent stating that an individual who was in school during their infectious period, has tested positive for COVID-19, and families should monitor their children for symptoms and isolate and test as needed.

It is important to note that if 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.

**Additional details regarding Medfield Public Schools' Quarantine and Close Contact protocols are contained in the [MPS COVID Illness and Testing Guidelines \(2/3/22\)](#).**

**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-**

Medfield Public Schools has adopted a district-wide Mask Optional policy for all students, faculty, and staff as of February 14, 2022 (Medfield High School) and February 28, 2022 (PK-8 students). It is important to note that in adopting this policy, the district acknowledges each family's own unique circumstances and respects students, faculty, and staff for their choice of whether or not to wear a mask.

**Physical Distancing-** DESE guidance removes physical distancing requirements within classrooms and lunchrooms.

## **STUDENT LEARNING**

With the return to full in-person learning, Medfield Public School educators will continue to 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 DIBELS (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/ FINE ARTS**

With the adoption of the district's Mask Optional policy (see above), Athletics and Fine Arts will operate unimpeded by the pandemic.

## **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 this 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, other family and community feedback opportunities, specifically the Parent Forum (8/16/21), the accompanying Parent/Guardian Comment Form, the [ESSER III Funding Allocation Survey](#) (9/28/21), Superintendent Parent Advisory meetings (2/9/22 & 3/9/22), and ongoing school committee meetings provide valuable insight into how to expand and improve upon our Fall 2021 model in the context of evolving DESE opening guidelines. Throughout the school year, 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 the last two years by supporting uninterrupted in-person learning in an environment that focuses on safety for students and staff alike. In addition to improving upon safe learning environment protocols (e.g. HVAC upgrades), in 2021-2022, we will continue our focus on supporting students' socio-emotional health and address targeted areas of learning. This will be accomplished through the addition of professional and support staff, expanding access to afterschool and summer learning opportunities, and providing meaningful professional development.

Over the course of this year, this plan will be revisited and updated as needed so that we can best meet our students' academic, social, and mental health needs. This will support their continued growth in 2021-2022 and beyond.