



Somerville Public Schools

Education • Inspiration • Excellence

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Dear SPS Parents/Guardians and Staff,

As we continue to plan for the gradual re-entry to our schools as buildings become available, I wanted to provide a brief overview of what we presented at the Schools Reopening Town Hall event on October 29th, as well as additional progress that we have made since then. Thank you for your interest and participation in these Town Hall events. We know that it's time away from your family and other obligations, and we appreciate your commitment to understanding the complex factors involved in ensuring a safe and sustainable gradual return to in-person learning. If you were not able to attend that virtual Town Hall event, you can access a recording of the event and the slides that were presented at: www.somervillema.gov/virtualtownhall.

As you know, we have been working closely with the Mayor's Office, the Health and Human Services Department, the Department of Infrastructure and Asset Management, and the Department of Public Works to put all of the pieces in place so that we can begin to safely transition to in-person instruction. This work has centered around three core components of our safety plan: (1) developing a comprehensive COVID-19 surveillance testing plan for all students and staff returning to our buildings, (2) improving building ventilation and filtration, and (3) establishing clear safety protocols for when students and staff are back in our school buildings. A testing plan has been finalized, building mitigation efforts are slated to begin this week and work will be completed in phases, and school safety protocols are in place. Along with putting in place these three important internal safety factors, we will continue to monitor COVID-19 numbers and projections as we make plans for re-entry into our schools.

In addition, as is part of our standard process, we are continuing to work closely and collaboratively with the Somerville Teachers Association representatives in planning for the transition to our Hybrid in-Person Learning Model.

Below, we have outlined some of the key information presented at the October 29th Town Hall, along with some updates on additional progress that we have made since then. We will host another Schools Reopening Town Hall event around mid-November, and will pass along that date once it is finalized. We will continue to be in touch with updates and additional details.

Respectfully,

Mary Skipper, Superintendent

Somerville Board of Health Order: Reinforcing the state mandate, the Somerville Board of Health established a similar mandate last week, requiring that all students and staff obtain the flu vaccine prior to returning to the classroom. The Somerville Board of Health also established a COVID-19 testing requirement, both of which have a provision for a medical exemption as verified by a medical provider. An important safety protocol will be ensuring that all students and staff get the seasonal flu vaccine and obtain baseline COVID-19 screening prior to returning to the classroom, and adopting a protocol to provide readily accessible school site-based COVID-19 testing to all students and staff on a routine basis.

Baseline and Routine COVID-19 Testing: All students and staff returning to school buildings will be required to have baseline COVID-19 testing and be tested routinely throughout the year.

- Baseline testing for staff who will be returning to school buildings in December will take place the week of November 16th.
- Baseline testing for students who will be returning to school buildings in December will take place on November 30th and December 1st.
- Students and staff will continue to be tested on-site regularly while at school.
- Testing will be the Anterior Nasal Swab test, which is a minimally invasive swab of the lower part of the nostrils.
- COVID-19 testing will be FREE.
- Details on the baseline and routine testing protocol will be sent to staff this week and families the following week.

Building Ventilation/Filtration Work: School buildings will be brought back online as building ventilation and filtration improvements needed to achieve a “Low Risk” score are completed.

- The Argenziano School, Capuano Early Childhood Center, and West Somerville Neighborhood School are the first 3 schools scheduled to be ready by December 1st.
- The new Somerville High School building will be ready for occupancy by January of 2021.
- The East Somerville Community School and the High School Mods are the second group of school buildings that are scheduled to be completed. No specific timeline has been determined for the completion of that work, although it is anticipated to be ready by early February of 2021.
- The Healey School, Kennedy School, and Winter Hill Community Innovation School are the third group of school buildings that are scheduled to be completed. The work required to bring these buildings to a “Low Risk” score is more complex, particularly for the Winter Hill. The anticipated timeline for completion of this work is March or April of 2021.
- The old Somerville High School main building, Brown School, and the CTE and Next Wave/Full Circle areas of the Edgerly building were all deemed not viable for classroom instruction during the pandemic as it was determined that it was not possible to achieve a “Low Risk” score even after extensive mitigation efforts to improve airflow to reduce the likelihood of aerosol transmission. These buildings will require extensive work.

First Group of Students Returning: We will be phasing in the groups of students who are eligible to return to in-person instruction. High Needs Special Education students currently in our specialized programs (ECIP, AIM, Life Skills, SKIP, SHIP, Transition, Multi-Graded, and SEEK), students who are English language learners at Levels 1 and 2 in the Sheltered English Immersion Program (SEIP), and PreK and Kindergarten students are eligible to return first. We will update on UNIDOS once we have a final construction timeline for the East Somerville Community School.

- Families will have the option of transitioning to the in-person hybrid model or remaining fully remote as they are now, working with an SPS educator.
- As we begin to phase in students based on a priority schedule, they will be placed into classrooms at school buildings that are available, which means that students may be in a different school than their home school this year.
- We will do everything we can to keep students with their originally assigned teacher, but there is a likelihood that some students will be assigned to a different teacher for this year.
- We are checking in with families of students in these groups now to find out who will be transitioning to in-person instruction and who will be remaining remote, and to address any questions they may have.
- Students designated as High Needs Special Education who opt to transition to in-person hybrid learning are scheduled to do so starting Thursday, December 3, 2020. They will be attending school 4 days a week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday) and will be remote on Wednesdays.

- Students who are Level 1 or 2 SEIP English language learners who opt to transition to in-person hybrid learning are scheduled to do so starting Monday, December 7, 2020. They will be attending school 4 days a week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday) and will be remote on Wednesdays.
- Pre-K and Kindergarten students who opt to transition to in-person hybrid learning are scheduled to do so starting Thursday, December 10, 2020. They will be attending school 2 days a week based on the cohort they were assigned to in September. ***Cohort A*** students will attend in-person Monday and Tuesday and be remote Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. ***Cohort B*** students will attend in-person Thursday and Friday and will be remote Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.