

March

Newsletter

Dear Students, Families and Staff,

March 8, 2021

On Friday, March 5th, Commissioner Riley was granted permission by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education that allows him to determine when hybrid and remote learning will no longer be options for districts across the state. The goal of this decision is to have elementary school students coming to school 5 days a week for in-person learning by April 5th. **At the time of this newsletter, we have not received any official guidance or notification from DESE, but it is important that you know we are in the process to determine how we can accommodate cohort A, B, C students for in-person learning at Park Avenue Elementary School.**

This decision by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education did not change the safety guidelines of having students sit 6 feet apart at lunch when they are unmasked. However, this decision does prompt districts to lower their social distancing guidelines from 6 feet to 3 feet or less.

As you know, we started in September in a remote school model where our highest risk students came into school for 4 days a week for in-person learning and teachers taught synchronously to those at home. In November we shifted to a hybrid model, where all students were able to come in for at least 2 days a week for in-person learning in addition to their online synchronous learning.

Our school model has been consistent and provides students across the district:

- 5.5 hours of time on learning Monday thru Thursday, plus 3.5 hours of time on learning on Fridays for elementary and middle school students
- 5.5 hours of time on learning Monday thru Thursday and 3.75 of synchronous learning in the morning and 2.25 hours of asynchronous learning in the afternoons for high school students.

We know there are lots of questions with DESE's decision. Without having specific guidance from DESE at the time of this newsletter, we are sharing some of our questions which we are working to find answers to:

1. What will happen to the time on learning waiver the Commissioner granted us this past Fall, that allows for ½ days of remote learning on Fridays at the elementary and middle schools?
2. What will happen if we cannot fit all Cohort A, B, and C students in a particular classroom with the 3 feet distancing?
3. What will happen if we are unable to secure space to ensure the 6 feet required distancing for eating lunch at Park Avenue?

Steps we are in the process of taking to have elementary students return to Park Avenue Elementary School for April 5th.

1. A DESE representative is visiting the district this week.
2. Meetings are scheduled with Union Leaders.
3. Measuring Park Avenue (first) and Webster Middle and Bartlett High classrooms to see if we can accommodate all Cohort A, B, and C students for in-person learning with 3 feet distancing.
4. Measuring cafeteria space and reviewing other building locations for make-shift cafeteria spaces.
5. More information will be forthcoming.

Other Updates:

1. Park Avenue Kindergarten students in Cohort A, B and C are already back in for 4 days of in-person learning. This was done because the numbers are low and they can still adhere to the 6 feet distancing.
2. Extra-Curricular Activities for WMS and BHS have been posted for club advisors/coaches and sign-ups will follow.
3. WMS and BHS are in the process of designing fun Social Emotional Support Groups for after-school. More information will be coming for students to sign up.
4. MCAS has been pushed back to May for grades 3, 4, 5 (May –June).
5. We are waiting to hear what DESE will decide for MCAS for grades 6, 7, 8 and high school.

Kind Regards,
Dr. Goguen