



## **Franklin Public Schools**

*Office of the Superintendent  
355 East Central Street; Suite 3  
Franklin, Massachusetts 02038  
Phone: 508-553-4819*

---

### Franklin Public Schools

#### Scenarios for Opening Kindergarten and Grade 1 Full and In-Person

---

To: Franklin School Committee  
From: Sara Ahern, Superintendent of Schools  
Date: December 3, 2020  
Re: Kindergarten and Grade 1 Full-time and In-person Scenarios

This memo is being provided in response to the Franklin School Committee's request for additional information about possible scenarios for Kindergarten and grade 1 students returning to school full and in-person. Discussions during School Committee meetings have been in response to parent/guardian concerns about hybrid instruction for our young learners. We agree that the best place for students to learn and thrive, particularly in the early grades, is in our classrooms, and we are eager to bring students back into the school setting.

The following information outlines some possible scenarios and, I think importantly, explains some anticipated implications and/or trade-offs. Implementation of any scenario will need to involve considerable further planning, the involvement of all stakeholders, as well as consideration of health and safety. Many concerns related to feasibility (as outlined in my [November 19, 2020 message](#) to the School Community following Governor Baker's press conference urging full and in-person schooling) remain pertinent to these grades.

Over the past several weeks, the elementary principals, central office leadership team, and I have begun thinking about possible scenarios. We walked each school building, examining the current use of space. We initiated a review of staffing, transportation, food service, and storage implications but do not have firm answers. The information being provided to you should be considered as a preliminary, high-level outline of our findings. Further input, discussion, and dialogue will need to occur with all kindergarten and grade 1 families, the Franklin Education Association, and our kindergarten and grade 1 educators.

This outline assumes that the current enrollment of students remains the same; however, a switch to the instructional model could yield families to seek a remote-only experience and a transfer to the Virtual Learning Academy. A related but unsettled question is whether or not families could opt to remain hybrid if kindergarten and grade 1 move to a full and in-person instructional model. Our recommendation is that they would not be able to do so as teaching more students in person would alter instructional requirements for teachers, and students learning remotely at home several days a week would have

too little contact with the teacher.

### I. Scenario I

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education required that the Franklin Public Schools Reopening Plan included a plan for full and in-person instruction. Within that plan, we identified the feasibility of our elementary schools accommodating full and in-person instruction at 3 feet of distancing but not at 6 feet. Given the current class sizes and square footage of our classroom spaces, full and in-person instruction could occur for kindergarten and grade 1 students at distances between 3-6 feet depending on the class section and school. Classrooms at Oak and Keller are larger, and classrooms at Davis Thayer and Kennedy are smaller, with classrooms at Jefferson and Parmenter falling in between these. Alternative spaces could be considered, such as school libraries, although that will have a ripple effect on other programs and services. Additionally, reducing the distancing standard will increase the number of close contacts identified within the school setting based on the current CDC definition of close contacts. Transportation routes would need to be modified to accommodate more kindergarten and grade 1 students attending full and in-person, which would lead to an increase in transportation costs. The lunch arrangements for some schools would need to be reconsidered.

### II. Scenario II

The current classrooms can not all accommodate all students full and in-person at 6 feet of distancing. The ability to do so varies widely across school buildings. With some additional furniture removal, some of our kindergarten and grade 1 classrooms can add additional desks. If additional families choose the VLA, additional classrooms may be able to accommodate all learners but it will not be equitable across all schools. It is anticipated that several classrooms at Davis Thayer and Kennedy Elementary School would need to be relocated. Based on the size of these schools and current building usage, it is likely that the move would need to be to elementary schools at the complexes, namely Keller Elementary School and Oak St. Elementary School. Elsewhere, cohorts from classrooms would need to be split into two different classroom sections and additional paraprofessionals would need to be hired in order to supervise students.

There are storage related considerations in this scenario. Additionally, there are transportation considerations as current bus routes do not cross district boundaries. There could be cost implications if there are separate bus runs needed for these students alone. This scenario would require additional staffing at a time when we are already understaffed and experiencing a very difficult time finding enough coverage for classes due to staff illness and quarantine requirements of staff members. The lunch arrangements for some schools would need to be reconsidered.

### III. Scenario III

In considering various scenarios, we explored the concept of half-days with, for example, cohort A attending in person in the morning and cohort B attending in person in the afternoon. We think this would be difficult for families' schedules. Additionally, this would uproot our elementary school schedules including specials schedules across all grade levels, schools, and the VLA. Half-days would require additional transportation with mid-day bus runs approximating \$115,000. There would be additional cleaning requirements mid-day in between the two cohorts, which might be difficult to manage with our current custodial staff, who are also managing lunches at around the same time.

---

Please know that we very much want our students to be back in school full time and in person. Changing the model requires much time and planning and can not be done quickly. We are enlisting some kindergarten and grade 1 teachers to assist with the development of supports that all teachers and families can put into place to assist with the remote learning days both from an instructional and a scheduling standpoint. Our next step involves surveying all kindergarten and grade 1 families about their intention in participating in full and in-person learning under the different scenarios we have outlined so that we have a better understanding of anticipated numbers.

We anticipate that some families will choose remote only and transfer to the VLA. This could necessitate an additional VLA teacher for Kindergarten and/or grade 1. If we were to add a VLA teacher(s) we may need to collapse sections in schools and assign different teachers to groups of children, depending on the numbers. This could be disruptive to the relationships established between teachers and among students so far in 2020-2021.

As we move forward in further consideration of various plans, our administrators and I will be working closely with our educators, the FEA, and our families to develop a plan that considers the educational well-being of our students as well as the health and safety of our entire community.