



Franklin Public Schools

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

August 1, 2020

Dear Franklin Families,

When August 1 comes, I always begin writing a back to school letter. This is like no other back to school letter and hopefully is one I only write once.

Yesterday, we submitted the Franklin Public Schools' preliminary reopening plan to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The plan contained a summary of three instructional models that the Reopening Taskforce and Administrative Team have been developing: full in-person instruction with health and safety practices in place; a hybrid model of both in-person and remote learning with smaller cohorts of students alternating between the two; and a plan for fully remote instruction.

Numerous emails and phone calls came in over the week advocating for each model. Clearly, it is a difficult decision as not everyone will be pleased. Each model, in their own way, comes with significant impacts to families.

In the submission, I indicated that the plan for opening school in Franklin is to begin the year in a *remote* setting for students in grades K-12. Within this model, however, High Needs Students will be prioritized for in-person instruction, as required by DESE. Our preschool, ECDC, will communicate their plans in a follow up letter to preschool families.

Remote instruction for 2020-2021 will be considerably different and more "robust" than the emergency remote learning of the spring closure. FPS remote instruction will involve:

- a full day of instruction in order to meet the "structured learning time" requirements, sometimes referred to as the required number of days/hours of "time on learning" required by the state
- live instruction to students, while also building in screen breaks and low-tech learning experiences
- familiar instructional strategies as well as highly effective novel strategies leveraging technology
- grading of student work
- attendance and accountability

We have used CARES funding from the state to invest in additional Chromebooks in order to provide access to technology to all students.

By opening in a fully remote way, we will be able to spend the next several weeks building a strong virtual learning environment with an overall goal to have as many students and staff return safely to school. We will build towards a hybrid of in-person and remote instruction in a phased way. We will monitor the efficacy of remote learning and we will examine readiness for students to be present in-person at benchmark dates.

Please note that the start date of the school year will be delayed. The Commissioner of Education has reduced the required number of school days from 180 to 170 in order to allow districts to use the first ten days in preparation with our faculty and staff. Staff will be preparing for remote instruction and receiving training on health and safety practices. We anticipate school to begin on or about, but no later than September 16, pending School Committee approval of a revised calendar.

The Comprehensive Reopening Plan is not due to the state until later in August, however we wish to convey this information to you now for planning purposes.

We invite you to a family webinar on Tuesday, August 4 at 6 pm or Wednesday, August 5 at 7:30 am where you can learn more about our plans, rationale, answers to FAQs, and what instruction will look like. Please pre-register at the following links:

Tuesday, August 4 at 6 PM: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_hpm_1UKCSCyKrPZEcVH0Aw

Wednesday, August 5 at 7:30 AM: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_6Jd64pWnSjWrBoParD9UmQ

If sessions exceed the limit of 1000, additional ones will be scheduled.

We appreciate the difficulty of the situation we are all in. Health and safety is our first priority. We are also viewing this approach as the most educationally sound way to attend to the health and safety requirements while prioritizing the quality of instruction and we look forward to sharing more about our thinking in the coming days.

Sincerely,

Franklin Public Schools

Please contact the Superintendent's Office at 508-553-4819 with questions.

Alternatively, you can e-mail reopening@franklinps.net