



Franklin Public Schools

Office of the Superintendent
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June 29, 2020

Dear Members of the Franklin Community:

Reopening of Schools in the Fall

Governor Baker's office and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recently released their initial guidance about reopening schools this fall. These guidelines were developed by a representative team of educators, leaders, medical experts, parents, and students. An overarching goal is on meeting students' academic, social, and emotional needs with the primary focus being the safe return of as many students as possible to in-person school settings.

The district will be spending time in the coming days to review this initial guidance. We understand that it is incomplete and that additional information will be issued later this summer. We are including the initial guidance if you would like to read it directly. Some key points include:

- Current medical research supports a safe in-person return to school - with preventive measures in place - as infection and transmission rates are lower for children than adults;
- Preventive measures include masks/face coverings, physical distancing, handwashing, and cleaning frequently touched surfaces;
- Masks/face coverings will be required for all students in Grade 2 and above and for all adults; they are recommended for students in Grade 1 and below;
- Based on current medical research, and in conjunction with other preventive measures, a minimum physical distance of three feet has been established.

We will be working to develop three learning plans - one for return to full in-person instruction with safety requirements, one for full remote learning, and one for hybrid learning that combines in-person and remote learning. Which plan is employed will depend on health data.

We acknowledge that there are still many questions. We will continue to communicate with you in the coming weeks and encourage you to review the guidance. Additionally, be on the lookout for family and faculty/staff surveys that will ask for your reflections on this spring's remote learning as well as your perspectives on reopening in the fall. We thank you for your continued patience.

Budget Update

The School Committee adopted a revised budget of \$65,658,500 at the Tuesday, June 23, 2020, School Committee meeting. This budget is a \$3.4 million reduction from the budget adopted in April, which totaled \$68,767,873 and represented level service with some additions to support student services. This revised budget is a reduced service budget and includes several reluctantly made reductions:

- 5 classroom teaching positions at the elementary level and 1 at the middle level

- 2 special education teaching positions at the elementary level and 2 at the middle level
- 3 FTEs classroom teaching positions at Franklin High School
- 2 Educational Support Professionals
- Specialists due to reduced classroom sections at the elementary level
- Consolidation of two director positions to one for both fine and performing arts
- Reorganization of the high school leadership team from 6 to 5 administrators (reduction of Deputy Principal position)
- Reduction of central office administrative assistant to half-time (0.5 FTE)
- Reduced clubs and activities at middle school
- Reduce music stipends for afterschool and evening performances
- Reduction of the job coach position at the high school

Undoubtedly, these reductions will have an impact on students in terms of class size as well as educational services our students and families experience.

We anticipate that there will be further reductions in local aid due to a \$6 billion shortfall in state revenue and that the school department will need to prepare for additional reductions to the budget. The magnitude of these reductions depends on Chapter 70 funding from the state, which is not yet known with certainty; many districts are preparing for a 10% reduction, which would amount to an additional \$2.4 million (estimate) reduction.

In positive financial news, as we prepare for school in the fall, DESE has announced additional grant funding opportunities to support the safe return to school, about which we are also keeping informed.

We encourage Franklin community members to continue to follow the budget development this summer. Our budget materials are posted on a dedicated webpage:

<https://www.franklinps.net/district/school-district-budget/pages/fy-2021-budget>

Despite these difficult financial challenges, the District reviewed the list of non-professional status educators who had been non-renewed in early June. These non-renew notices were given prior to the statutory deadline of June 15 in order to afford us flexibility during an uncertain budget season. At this time, 54 educators have received re-appointment letters due to their specialization. We hope to be able to re-appoint additional non-PTS faculty soon.

Davis Thayer Closing Study

The Facilities Analysis Subcommittee of the School Committee continues to gather and review information and data related to the study of the potential closure of the Davis Thayer Elementary School. At this time, the architectural firm of Kaestle-Boos is preparing a Facilities Capacity Report that will detail the physical capacity and educational adequacy of each K-8 school building. This report uses the enrollment forecast developed by McKibben Associations in February to provide the School Committee with considerations related to building use across all facilities in the future.

The report is anticipated to be completed this summer when it will be first shared with the Subcommittee and then presented to the full School Committee. After the presentation, the Facilities Analysis Subcommittee will

host a community informational meeting and the report will be shared on the DT Facilities Analysis webpage:
<https://www.franklinps.net/district/davis-thayer-facilities-analysis>

The Five-Stage process can also be found on the webpage:
https://www.franklinps.net/sites/franklinmaps/files/uploads/image_5.png

At this time, the Subcommittee is also developing a questionnaire to elicit input from the Davis Thayer faculty/staff and families, as well as the community. We will continue to provide updates throughout this process.

Lastly, we want to acknowledge how difficult this spring has been for families and our faculty/staff. It is our sincere wish to the entire Franklin community that you have a healthy and safe summer break.

Sincerely,

Franklin Public Schools

Please contact the Superintendent's Office at 508-553-4819 with any questions. Please leave a voicemail. Although we are working remotely, voicemails are sent to email and will be responded to in a timely fashion.