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Bedford Public Schools
Parent Forums on Reopening - July 21, July 23 and July 29, 2020
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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There were extensive questions raised at the Parent Forums for Reopening. The questions are organized by topic, and answered below to the best extent possible.

Health and Safety

Q: Can you address whether regular testing on a weekly basis has been considered as part of school reopening, similar to the approach many colleges and universities are taking

COVID testing is not recommended in the DESE guidelines at this time but that may change

Q: How will the schools ensure compliance with public health guidelines such as mask wearing and physical distancing if students (or teachers/staff) don't comply? Is there a code of conduct that everyone will have to sign and adhere to?

We will be emphasizing the wearing of masks, hand washing and social distancing as a commitment to our community and working with students to make sure they understand the importance of these concepts for the health of our entire community. There likely will be consequences added to the code of conduct should individuals refuse to comply.

Q: Your survey suggests that if you keep your student home full time, it's your responsibility, unless they are considered "high risk". Can you clarify what is considered high risk?

This guidance has evolved to become more inclusive of any parents/guardians making choices to attend remotely. There are no eligibility requirements for remote learning. If a student needs to stay home for any reason we will work with the family to enroll the student in the remote academy once we have that information from DESE

Q: How do you currently plan to ensure that nobody infected with COVID-19 comes to school (simply checking temperatures is not enough, as carriers can either be asymptomatic, or have symptoms other than fever.)

Following the DESE guidelines we will be relying on parents and guardians to keep symptomatic students home. We understand that DESE is reconsidering their testing protocols but at this point we do not have guidance that expands screening procedures beyond the home.

Q: As parents our minds would be at ease if we knew that the panelists were being informed by research on issues like learning and cognition and public health as much as they were relying on the opinions of neighboring communities. Can you confirm this is the case?

Yes, we have been informed by a large number of documents, research studies, and public health information.

Q: Has there been any talk of quarantining (not traveling/vacationing or making a suggestion of quarantining locally) for two weeks prior to school starting?

This is now covered by the Governor's order that took effect August 2, 2020 regarding travel beyond our region of states with lower infection rates.

Q: Are we looking at results from other countries (especially in Europe) or states that have or will soon be returning part of full time? Can their results, along with our own guidance, inform our decisions?

Yes, and they are. As we continue to work on our plans we are taking in new information all the time.

Q: Social distancing may be impossible for Kindergarten and other young children. Any comments on that?

Our teachers will work hard to support success with the three most important mitigation methods including masks, social distancing and hand washing. Yes, this will be a challenge with our youngest students.

Q: What information will be used to determine whether students will return in person or remotely. And if students return in person, what information would be used to determine if/when we should switch to remote learning?

Health metrics provided by state and local health authorities will be used to determine an appropriate course of action.

Q: Will the parent guarding survey be shared?

Yes, we can make the data available.

Q: If regular testing does happen, this may be difficult for students who are sensory sensitive.

Yes, this is true and hopefully children will be supported by their medical practitioner.

Q: Is there a way for us to donate PPE to students and/or teachers who may or may not be able to acquire them? (i.e. masks and gloves)

The district has acquired the PPE that is recommended for its staff and students. Families are asked to send their students to school with masks or face coverings. Volunteers are donating PPE for needy students.

Q: If the kids have slight symptoms like sneezing or mild cold, are you strictly enforcing that those kids stay home and not attend school?

Yes, everyone who enters the school building must be free of symptoms that may indicated COVID-19.

Q: What are the options when a child or a teacher tests positive for COVID?

There are specific protocols for isolation, quarantine, contact tracing and testing that are carried out in conjunction with Bedford Public Health and with state advice and support.

Q: Based on existing literature, the incubation period ranges from 2-14 days, wouldn't it be more logical to split in person attendance based on an every 2 week schedule? Rotating every 2-3 days seems no different than a full return of in person attendance.

Since exposure can occur anytime for anyone, there really is no window time that is most logical. The three mitigation strategies of social distancing, mask wearing and hand washing are the basis of all plans. The 2-3 day rotation is educationally effective especially for students who need support with engagement, social emotional support, or academic support.

Q: What about teachers who have pre-existing conditions or are immunocompromised? I hope you are not going to have them in the school building.

The administration and teachers' union have worked hand in hand on this planning. Once plans are refined, BPS and Bedford Education Association will discuss staff matters specifically. Health and Safety will be at the forefront.

Q: Some districts aren't even considering 3' social distancing. Is there a concern in Bedford about less social distance?

Yes, there is a concern - 3' versus 6' social distancing is a foundational decision for Bedford.

Q: Will a student be forced to quarantine at home if someone in his/her family has a confirmed or possible case of covid?

Yes, having a family member with COVID-19 requires quarantine of close contacts (household members).

Q: If a teacher is sick would all associated students and co-teachers quarantine?

There are specific protocols for isolation, quarantine, contact tracing and testing that are carried out in conjunction with Bedford Public Health and with state advice and support. How many would be required to quarantine depends upon the determination by Public Health contact tracers who identify close contacts.

Q: What of the fire or Alice drills with COVID in mind?

This is an excellent question and information will be forthcoming.

Q: Can kids take mask breaks?

Yes, these are important for all students.

Teaching and Learning

Q: Where is the line for eligibility for remote learning (siblings of medically susceptible students, students who have relatives who are medically susceptible for COVID, etc)?

All students will have the opportunity to choose a remote learning option, we are waiting for guidance from the state as to what that program will look like but expect it will be a comprehensive Learning Management System supported to some extent by BPS staff.

Q: Using your instinct as educators, which of the plans seems to be the best, in your opinion?

Thank you, with all of the information that is around us we are trying to figure out what is the best balance of health and safety and academic progress. Being in school is best educationally but may not be possible given health and safety concerns.

Q: Will band, orchestra, and chorus will be able to occur in the school year?

DESE just released guidelines for these courses and physical education on Monday 7/26. At this point the guidance is that the band and chorus classes may not happen indoors but can happen outdoors if the students are at least 10' apart.

Q: If a student is going to be home for remote learning full-time, for whatever reason, will they still have their scheduled classes?

That will depend if the student has chosen the remote academy or the student is remote with all of their classmates. If we as a system go remote the student would have their schedule and would be working with "their" teacher. If they choose the remote academy they would not have an active schedule but would be fully engaged with a different schedule, supported by BPS teachers to the extent possible.

Q: Would you please further define what remote learning looks like in your current plan right now? Do you foresee daily zoom meetings with Bedford teachers, at what level in terms of hours? Do you plan to send kids to remote learning websites? Thank you.

At this point we are waiting for information from DESE about a remote academy. We will only have Bedford teachers teaching remotely if we go with that option from the start. There will be a statewide Learning Management System supported by Bedford Teachers to the extent possible.

Q: Can Homeschool students have access to Lexia and other resources?

The district can consider these requests for access.

Q: Is cybersecurity and protection of student data still a concern - how is the district addressing this?

The district has successfully implemented security measures and will continue to protect student privacy.

Q: Has Bedford considered a mix where students who need in person instruction due to IEP/need to be in and others remote? Is this an acceptable way to start?

We have and are considering what approach to take for our most vulnerable students

Q: What training are teachers receiving now to help them be ready for the unique requirements of online learning?

Teachers have been participating in district sponsored professional development and curriculum development work to prepare for the upcoming school year remote, hybrid, and in-person learning. Teachers will continue to receive training at the start of the new school year as well.

Q: As you know, the Summer Adventures and Kids Club are open. Has that experience been useful?

Most of their activities are outside but the information from them has been very helpful

Q: What will remote class like? Spring virtual class was low quality and not acceptable. We parents want a stream living class the same as physical class.

Remote learning will be enhanced compared to last spring when all of us were in a crisis situation. Remote learning will be a robust, engaging, and rigorous curriculum with attendance and grades within an environment with social emotional supports

Q: Since there is some likelihood that there will be at least some virtual learning during this upcoming school year, can you discuss the specifics about what is being done to improve the virtual learning experience?

Teachers are doing an amazing amount of training on their own time (right now) to prepare for the upcoming school year remote, hybrid, and in-person learning. Teachers will continue to receive training at the start of the new school year as well.

Remote learning will be enhanced compared to last spring when all of us were in a crisis situation. Remote learning will be a robust, engaging, and rigorous curriculum with attendance and grades within an environment with social emotional supports

Q: Will a more robust and required social and emotional program be required all student due to the impact of the pandemic and systemic racism?

This district is building in significant time and content for students to mitigate the trauma many have sustained in recent months.

Q: Do these plans apply to preschool students?

Yes, the integrated preschool at Davis is also planning for reopening. Special Ed students enrolled at preschool are eligible to be in-person as much as possible due to their high needs and inability to participate well in remote education.

Q: What accommodations can be made for kids on IEPs who need to be TAUGHT and CANNOT self-instruct?

Students who cannot independently access remote curriculum are being carefully identified and planned for in all potential models. The district will increase the amount of live teaching that is available, with increased tools and resources available to teachers who have increased their skills with this technology.

Q: Will Kid's Club be open for students on their remote days, if Bedford is Hybrid?

Kid's Club is working on this possibility.

Q: For a worst case scenario - "on-line" learning - can anyone on the panel explain how this will work - homework, quizzes, exams, tests, MCAS, other forms of evaluation

Remote learning will be enhanced compared to last spring when all of us were in a crisis situation. Remote learning will be a robust, engaging, and rigorous curriculum with attendance and grades within an environment with social emotional support. Teachers have been working diligently to increase their awareness and abilities within a remote learning environment.

Q: Our child is entering 6th grade. What kind of models are you considering for subject oriented classrooms? Will cohorts stay together in all subjects when moving through the building?

Secondary hybrid models are being developed to approximate a typical school schedule more closely. Minimizing cohort movement is key to the plan. These plans are being refined and more information will be forthcoming.

Q: As a back-up plan assuming we need to revert to remote learning are there any online materials you are considering purchasing to augment zoom learning materials?

The district has been expanding its online tools substantially, and has acquired and begun training on a variety of excellent systems that will enable teachers to more effectively present content, engage and assess student learning.

Q: Can you talk about how these three plans affect graduation requirements or state testing expectations?

As of now, State graduation requirements and testing is unchanged in the upcoming school year. This is not a local decision.

Q: How will lab and hands-on classes (science, tech ed, etc.) be done in each of the three plans?

There are guidelines about laboratory classes and the district is planning for modifications including individual safety equipment (e.g, goggles) and extra supplies to avoid sharing of materials.

Q: Will in person classes be recorded so if students are quarantining at home, they can still receive the lesson?

Simulcasting and recording of lessons is complex and is still being evaluated.

Q: Will my child be prepared for college with the planned learning schedules and hybrid days?"

All seniors nationwide who are transitioning to college face a challenge and our counseling staff have been working diligently to develop a plan to support the college process.

Q: Once we choose an option for learning, will we be “locked in” to that choice for the semester, the year, etc.? Or will there be flexibility to move to another model during the school year?

The plan spans the time frame of September to January, and parent elections should take that into account. The district may not be in a position to allow changes of placement, but will be flexible to the extent that it can be given health, safety and resources available.

School Operations

Q: Can you address the size limitations the middle school might have?

Size limitations are based on either students being 3’ or 6’ away from one another with masks on. This will determine the class size limits at all four schools.

Q: Can someone clarify the bus situation?

Buses will run at significantly reduced capacity, students will be assigned seats in a diagonal pattern and must wear a mask the entire ride and must remain seated throughout the trip.

Q: Is the district working closely to ensure that METCO students have as much access to onsite instruction as their peers?

Absolutely yes, all of Bedford Public School students are included in the district’s plans which emphasize equity.

Q: Can you share what have been the updates to the HVAC systems - filter replacements, increased outdoor air supply? Do we have CO2 monitors at the schools to monitor indoor air quality?

The HVAC systems are being tested this summer with the assistance of outside mechanical engineers. Yes, the systems do include CO2 monitoring. We also have a regular schedule for the replacement of filters in all HVAC systems. All systems introduce fresh air into the buildings.

We will be providing more detailed information about our HVAC systems soon. In the meantime, please know that the HVAC systems are being tested this summer with the assistance of outside mechanical engineers. Yes, the systems do include CO2 monitoring. We also have a regular schedule for the replacement of filters in all HVAC systems.

Q: What is the plan to bring our students from Boston into classes in Bedford?

The district will ensure that enough Boston buses are available with reduced capacity limits. Additional buses will be supplied as necessary and the state has made resources available for this purpose.

Q: Are kids going to have lunch and recess at school?

Yes, lunch is being held in small cohort groups versus the cafeteria. Recess and more outdoor time will be strongly encouraged.

Q: Are you still looking at whether kids will switch classrooms as before the pandemic, since the MS and HS students often migrate through the building for each class.

Movement through the building at the secondary level will be minimized.

Q: Will the nature's class in Grade 6 be definitely canceled?

Field Trips are not currently being scheduled through January 2021.

Q: What about classrooms with no a/c and windows that barely open?

If there are rooms without ventilation, these are taken out of use.

Q: Is JGMS still going to be a polling place during the fall election given the situation?

There is no school on election day. This has been planned as a school closure day.

Extended Day

Q: Since sports activities remain in question for the fall, will guidance be given to students who are looking to lead “captain’s practices”, to also hold off on such activities?

At this time, they must follow the social distancing requirements of the state. The athletic director will work with student-athletes, coaches, parents, and boosters to ensure the health and safety of our students and their families. The MIAA has delayed the start of the fall athletic season to September 16th.