

Return to Learn Addendum #1 9/11/2020

Note: This addendum to the Return to Learn document, which was published on August 14, 2020, contains additional information and very important updates regarding the reopening of our schools. Additional addendums will be published as circumstances change and new information becomes available.

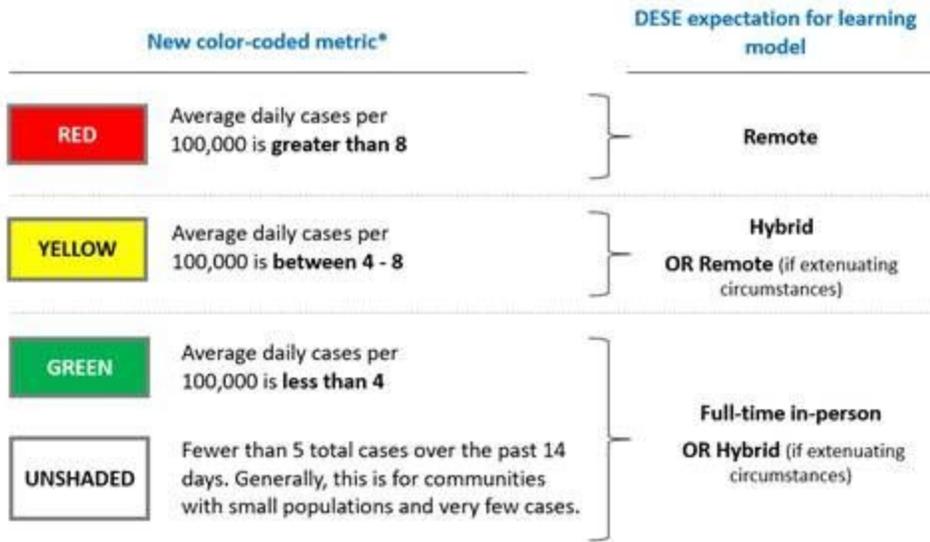
Use of Metrics to Guide School Openings and Closings

The following information has been provided by DESE:

There has been much discussion about COVID-19 health and safety metrics that can be helpful guidelines for when schools re-open this school year. Such metrics should serve as a guide as to whether schools should open using full-time in-person, hybrid, or remote models, and will also support future decision-making if the impact of COVID-19 requires us to switch between educational models throughout the school year.

Each Wednesday, the Department of Public Health releases its Weekly COVID-19 Public Health Report that contains critical metrics for each municipality. There is now a color-coded indication posted for each municipality calculated on a rolling two-week basis.

- Red will designate communities with more than 8 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents.
- Yellow will designate communities that have more than 4 and up to 8 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents.
- Green will designate communities that have 4 or fewer COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents.
- Unshaded will designate communities with small populations and fewer than 5 cases within the last 14 days.
- Because the impact of the virus is local, the concept of this particular COVID-19 health/safety designation is focused on the municipal level.



**Measured as a 14-day rolling average and will be reported weekly as part of the online DPH dashboard*

General Guidance for Interpreting These Metrics

While average daily cases per 100,000 over a two-week period is the metric that determines the color-coding for each community, districts and schools should also monitor whether cases are increasing or decreasing as compared to the prior period. The local test positivity rate also remains an important metric to monitor. (NOTE: As of 9/10/20, the positivity rate in Ipswich is .34%) In consultation with local boards of health, districts should consider whether these additional metrics and underlying data may indicate other concerning trends. Please note that districts should look at multiple consecutive weekly COVID-19 reports to assess trends in order to inform any changes to their learning model for the start of the school year or to make any changes during the year.

It is the expectation of DESE that districts' learning models will follow this color-coded metric unless there are extenuating circumstances identified after consultation with local boards of health. This includes reviewing additional metrics, such as whether cases are increasing or decreasing; the local test positivity rate; and other contextual factors. (For Ipswich, classroom space is prohibitive even at 3 ft. social distancing.)

Athletics

FALL

- Registration is open for approved fall sports (Boys & Girls Cross Country, Field Hockey, Golf, and Boys & Girls Soccer) and will close on Monday, 9/14.
- Practices start on Friday 9/18.
- The Fall 1 season is from 9/18/2020 to 11/20/2020 for all approved sports.
- Cheerleading, Football, and Volleyball have all been moved to the Fall 2 season, which is scheduled for 2/22/2021 to 4/25/2021.
- The game schedule is still waiting for the approval of all Cape Ann League schools and will be released soon.
- Competitions are with Cape Ann League schools only (no non-league games this fall).

Revised/Clarified Definitions

1. Definition of a Close Contact

If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, his/her close contacts will be defined as only those who have been within 6 feet of distance of the individual for at least fifteen minutes while the person was infectious. The infectious period begins 2 days prior to symptom onset. If someone is asymptomatic, the infectious period is considered to begin 2 days prior to the collection of their positive test. While previous guidance stated that all students in an elementary classroom would be defined as close contacts, this new guidance provides a narrower definition of a close contact, which mirrors DPH guidance.

2. Policy for When a Close Contact May Return to School

All close contacts should be tested but must self-quarantine for 14 days after the last exposure to the person who tested positive, regardless of test result. After further consultation with the medical community, we are updating this guidance as the virus can cause illness from 2-14 days after exposure and asymptomatic individuals can transmit the virus. Going forward, even if an individual identified as a close contact receives a negative test result, they must continue to self-quarantine for the full 14 days as the virus may take up to 14 days to cause illness.

3. Policy for When a Student/Staff Person May Return to School After COVID-19 Symptoms

If a student or staff member has COVID-19-like symptoms, he/she may return to school after having received a negative COVID-19 test result, has improvement in symptoms, and has been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications. If a provider makes an alternative diagnosis for the COVID-19-like symptoms, the individual may return to school based on the recommendations for that alternative diagnosis (e.g., influenza or strep pharyngitis). If a student or staff member presents COVID-19-like symptoms and chooses not to be tested, he/she may return to

school 10 days from start of symptoms, as long as symptoms have improved and he/she has been without fever for at least 24 hours prior to returning to school without the use of fever reducing medication.

4. **Definition of COVID-19 Related Fever**

Over the summer, the threshold for a COVID-19 related fever by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been updated from greater than 100.4°F to greater than 100.0°F. As a result, going forward, a fever as a COVID-19 symptom will be defined as 100.0°F or higher.

5. **Students Wearing Masks**

Masks or face coverings are among the most critical components to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. DESE guidance recommends that students in grade 2 and above are required to wear a mask/face covering that covers their nose and mouth at all times, with the exception of meals and mask breaks. Whenever possible, students in pre-kindergarten through grade 1 who can safely and appropriately wear, remove, and handle masks should do so. Even if students are spaced six feet apart in classrooms, the use of masks is still required unless students are eating lunch or taking a mask break. The Ipswich School Committee has approved & adopted the following Ipswich Public Schools Mask Policy, which differs slightly from DESE guidance:

File: EBCFA

FACE COVERINGS

The Ipswich School District is committed to providing a safe environment as schools reopen during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to public health experts, one of the best ways to stop the spread of coronavirus and to keep members of our school community safe is the use of face masks or face coverings; therefore, in accordance with guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), the following requirements are in place until further notice.

A face covering must be worn by all individuals in school buildings, on school grounds, and on school transportation, even when social distancing is observed. Adults may only remove face coverings when alone in an enclosed space or in an outdoor space with greater than 6ft social distancing. Face coverings should:

- Cover the nose, mouth, and secure under the chin (no bandanas, valves, gators, or buffs)
- Fit snugly but comfortably against the face
- Be secured with ties or ear loops
- Allow for breathing without restriction
- If cloth, include at least two layers of fabric

Face coverings should be hygienically handled, cleaned, and stored according to CDC guidance. Never share or swap face coverings. Cloth face coverings should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled. In alignment with existing district policy regarding personal appearance, masks must not display insignia that are inappropriate to the schools such as advertising alcohol, drugs, or sexually offensive material; or containing racial, ethnic, or religious slurs that are obscene, vulgar, or offensive.

The use of face coverings in educational settings may present challenges, particularly for younger students and students with special healthcare or educational needs. Families are encouraged to reach out to their building principals with concerns or questions. Individuals may be excused from the requirement for the following list of reasons, per CDC guidance if the individual:

- is younger than 2 years old
- has trouble breathing
- is unconscious
- is incapacitated
- cannot remove the mask or face covering without assistance

In addition, masks or face coverings will not be required for anyone who has a medical, behavioral, or other challenge making it unsafe to wear a face mask or face covering. These exceptions to this policy, under certain circumstances, must be approved by the building principal in consultation with the school nurse or local Board of Health. Face shields or physical barriers may provide an alternative in some instances. Parents may not excuse their child from the face covering requirement by signing a waiver. A written note from a physician is required for a requested exemption.

Additionally, face masks or face coverings will not be required when appropriate social distancing is enforced:

- during mask breaks;
- while eating or drinking;
- during physical education classes, outdoors only; and/or
- while outside as specified in the District's Return To Learn document.

A student's mask or face covering is to be provided by the student's family. Staff members are responsible for providing their own face coverings; however, the district will supply disposable face coverings for staff members, students, or other individuals who arrive at a building or board school transportation, without one.

If students are in violation of this policy, the building principal will consult with the parent/guardians to determine whether an exception is appropriate, or the student may be removed from the school building for in-person learning until such time as they can comply with

the requirement or the requirement is lifted. Violations of this policy by staff will be handled in the same manner as other violations of School Committee policy. Visitors in violation of this policy will be denied entry to the school/district facility.

This policy will remain in place until rescinded by the School Committee.

LEGAL REF.: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, COVID-19 Order No. 31 -
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/may-1-2020-masks-and-face-coverings/download>

REFS.: Center for Disease Control and Prevention – Considerations for Wearing
Masks -
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/cloth-face-cover.html>
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education –
Reopening Guidelines - <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/>
Commonwealth of Massachusetts – Mask Up MA! –
<https://www.mass.gov/news/mask-up-ma>

SOURCE: MASC – August 2020

6. **Physical Distancing Guidelines**

Physical distancing is a critical tool in preventing the spread of COVID-19. The CDC and DPH recommend 6 feet of distance between individuals. The World Health Organization and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend a minimum of 3 feet of distance. DESE recommends that districts aim for 6 feet of distance where feasible. When 6 feet is not feasible, 3 feet is an acceptable minimum as long as staff and students wear masks covering the nose and mouth at all times. If the 3 feet minimum is applied on the bus, all staff and students regardless of age must wear masks at all times. Please note that decisions to apply a 3-foot minimum will likely increase the number of close contacts associated with the occurrence of a case.

7. **Immunizations required in all models of learning**

Previously released guidance emphasized the importance of maintaining school immunization requirements and **obtaining the flu vaccine** as students return to in-person school. This is equally important for students who are enrolled in remote or hybrid schooling models. Immunization requirements must be met in all models of learning. The Commonwealth has adopted a new requirement of all students receiving

the Flu vaccine before December 31, 2020 unless there is a medical or religious exemption. We are in the process of setting up a flu clinic in conjunction with CVS Pharmacy.

8. Medical Waiting Room

As noted in previous DESE guidance, schools must establish a separate room for students exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms or who may have learned about a positive test result while at school, while waiting to be picked up by a family member. This space must be supervised. If feasible given space and staffing constraints, schools are encouraged to provide individual students with their own waiting room. If more than one student is in the same waiting room at a time, each student must be at least 6 feet apart (and should be spaced as far apart as possible) and wearing a surgical mask (non-N95 and non-cloth) while in the medical waiting room. If a student does not already have a surgical mask, the school should provide one. Schools must also be equipped with the PPE for the staff involved with supervision of the waiting room.

9. Mobile Testing Unit Available

In the event that Ipswich experiences a spike in COVID-19 cases, school officials will be able to request a state-sponsored mobile testing unit come to their school to test a group of students and/or staff, if a potential cluster of COVID-19 has been identified and transmission appears to have occurred within the school. The administration will consult with public health authorities first to determine if a request for mobile testing should be made.

The mobile rapid response unit will provide free testing of asymptomatic students or staff who are not known to be a close contact of someone who tested positive when there is evidence that COVID-19 transmission may have occurred within a classroom or school within the past 14 days. The Department of Public Health and DESE will release guidance on how and when testing can be requested, as well as testing and resulting protocols.

Attendance Policy

According to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) preexisting attendance policy, a student must be at school, at a school related activity, or receiving academic instruction for at least half the school day to be counted as present. Students who are not physically present at school but who are receiving academic instruction from the district for at least half the school day should be counted as present. Examples of academic instruction include tutoring, online learning, or distance learning.

1. Daily Attendance

When taking attendance, schools should confirm that students participated in at least half of each day's scheduled structured learning time activities, defined as "time during which students are engaged in regularly scheduled instruction, learning activities, or learning assessments within the curriculum for study of the 'core subjects' and 'other subjects.' In addition to classroom time where both teachers and students are present, structured learning time may include directed study, independent study, technology-assisted learning, presentations by persons other than teachers, school-to-work programs, and statewide student performance assessments." Periods of time when students are working remotely will look different across schools and districts, so the process for taking attendance and confirming student participation will also look different.

Below are some examples districts may consider when adopting or adapting an attendance policy for remote learning. These are applicable for students who are learning remotely full-time, as well as for students who are learning remotely as part of a hybrid model.

- **Primarily Synchronous Schedule**
If a student's remote schedule is mostly comprised of live, synchronous instruction, such as for schools and districts that are operating fully remote, teachers should take attendance for each instructional period and report it as they would in-person. An educator or other school staff member should be assigned to reach out to students who are absent for one or multiple classes to identify the reason for absence and provide support accordingly.
- **Primarily Asynchronous Schedule**
If a student's remote schedule has a larger proportion of asynchronous, independent work, we strongly recommend schools assign educators or other school staff members to conduct a minimum of one check-in with each student every day to ensure the student is capable of participating that day. An educator or other school staff member should also have a way to monitor student engagement throughout the day, to confirm that he or she participated in at least half of the scheduled structured learning time activities. This could include check-ins during each scheduled asynchronous block, completion of lessons or activities assigned through an LMS, submission of assignments, completion of activity logs, written reflections of work accomplished during the day, parent/caregiver attestations of work accomplished, etc. Every school/district should ensure the method of collecting and reporting attendance is consistent across classrooms and clearly communicated to students and families. Students who cannot be reached, who convey they are unable to participate that day, or who demonstrate less than half of the day's scheduled structured learning time activities should be marked as absent. This attendance policy is separate and

distinct from Structured Learning Time requirements, which require a minimum number of academic instructional hours each day. For the 2020-21 school year, this includes 5 hours each day for elementary students and 5.5 hours each day for secondary students.

Student Activities Before and After School

DESE has provided districts and schools with guidance for student groups that involve mixing of cohorts and school events that may require additional safety considerations.

Student activities provide important opportunities to develop leadership and teamwork skills, engage in new experiences, and serve their community. We strongly encourage schools and districts to continue providing these opportunities to students this fall. **Adaptations to these activities, however, are necessary to support the safety of students and staff.** Specifically, this guidance covers:

- Student activities before and after school
- Non-athletic student groups
- Non-athletic inter-school competitions
- Volunteering
- Gatherings with outside participants
- Leaving school grounds

1. Non-Athletic Student Groups

Non-athletic student group meetings are likely to involve increased mixing between student cohorts. This may be more relevant for elementary students, who likely will have stricter cohorts. **Whenever feasible and to the maximum extent possible, these meetings should be held virtually.**

For in-person meetings, we recommend the following guidelines:

- Group meetings should be supervised by staff and must abide by DESE's core health and safety guidelines (including masks, physical distance, and frequent handwashing).
- Groups that work collaboratively (e.g., student newspaper, yearbook) should abide by the shared equipment guidance previously released.
- Group sizes should be reduced and work organized into cohorts to the extent feasible.

2. Non-athletic Inter-School Competitions

Whenever feasible and to the maximum extent possible, inter-school competitions should be held virtually. In-person interschool competitions are permitted if at least 6 feet of distance can be maintained between individuals and participants and attendees wear masks at all times.

- If an inter-school competition is held in person, it must abide by the guidelines below for large gatherings and leaving school grounds.

- To the maximum extent feasible, inter-school competitions should:
 - Not share equipment;
 - Be held outdoors, if possible;
 - Shorten events or reduce participants; and
 - Incorporate protective equipment in a safe manner to further reduce spread of respiratory particles.

3. Volunteering

Any volunteer activities must abide by DESE's core health and safety guidelines (including masks, physical distance, frequent handwashing). Consider volunteer activities that are outdoors and do not require person-to-person interaction (e.g., planting flowers in a park). Consider virtual volunteer service (e.g., younger student mentor program, pen pals).

4. Gatherings of 10 or More That Include Outside Participants

Whenever feasible and to the maximum extent possible, these gatherings should be moved online. Online events can be held where all participants are virtual, or where students and staff are in person, but audiences are virtual.

In-person gatherings (such as events and performances) should be discouraged and must abide by the following safety requirements. Only essential, student-centered events should be held in person, such as student group activities or inter-school competitions.

Gatherings of 10 or more that include outside participants, such as in-person events, inter-school competitions, and field trips, typically involve families and others outside of the school community, including people who may be in higher risk groups. As a result, it is important to put in place additional safety considerations.

- Whenever feasible and to the maximum extent possible, hold all events or competitions outdoors.
- Masks are required except when unsafe due to age, medical condition, or disability.
- All participants must maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance from every other participant in the gathering, aside from participants who are members of the same household. Additional physical distancing requirements for specific activities can be found in DESE's previous guidance.
- Limit attendees to the extent feasible:
 - Indoor gatherings are limited to 8 persons per 1,000 square feet of accessible, indoor floor space and never more than 25 persons in a single, enclosed indoor space.
 - Outdoor gatherings are limited to 25 percent of the maximum permitted occupancy of the facility or space, or 8 persons per 1,000 square feet if

no occupancy limitation is on record, and never more than 50 persons in a single outdoor space.

- For outdoor performances involving singing or brass or wind instruments, there must be at least 25 feet of distance between performers and the first row of the audience.
- Indoor performances including theater, band, or orchestra are not permitted at this time, but may be in the future in accordance with state guidelines.
- Attendees should be informed in the weeks leading up to and including the day of the event and at the entrance to the event that they must not attend if they are feeling unwell or showing any symptoms of COVID-19.
- Consider scheduling multiple events, if needed, to allow for physical distancing.
- If the event is ticketed, tickets should be sold online in advance, if possible. Consider touchless payment for in-person ticket sales, and use handwashing before and after transactions.
- Establish directional pathways to manage visitor flow for foot traffic in order to minimize contact (e.g., one-way entrance and exit to shows, one-way pathways). Post clearly visible signage regarding these policies.
- Encourage the use of electronic versions or no-touch displays in place of commonly touched physical materials (such as programs or playbills) where possible. All commonly touched physical materials must be discarded or sanitized between use.
- Ensure access to handwashing facilities on site, including soap and running water, wherever possible, and encourage frequent handwashing; alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60 percent alcohol may be used as an alternative.

5. Leaving School Grounds

Whenever feasible and to the maximum extent possible, consider virtual alternatives to leaving school grounds. Generally, it is not recommended to hold organized school trips leaving school grounds; however, the risk level of leaving school grounds depends on the type of activity and transportation for the trip. All trips leaving school grounds must comply with all health and safety guidance, including physical distancing, mask wearing, hand washing, and sanitation.

- If a school trip includes walking or a brief ride that abides by transportation guidelines, takes place where significant interaction with the public is not expected, and abides by the health and safety guidelines, it is permitted. For example, students may walk to a nearby park to observe plant and animal life during science class.
- If a school trip includes a long bus ride (more than three hours one way), results in close interaction with additional people (e.g., within 6 feet of outside chaperones or the public), or cannot abide by the health and safety guidelines, it is not permitted.

- Field trips can pose an additional risk due to the need to travel offsite and the need for additional chaperones. **Ideally, all field trips should be held virtually.**
- Out of state travel is not recommended. vlf an out of state trip occurs, it must abide by the state COVID-19 travel order.