



Somerville Public Schools

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Mary E. Skipper, *Superintendent*

8 Bonair Street · Somerville, MA 02145-3246

mkipper@k12.somerville.ma.us · www.somerville.k12.ma.us

T 617-629-5200, x6005 · F 617-629-5611



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Dear Families and Staff:

We are making significant progress in developing plans to bring Pre-K to Grade 8 students back to school for in-person learning every day.

Last week, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) issued new guidelines requiring that districts transition all K-8 students to a five-day in-person learning model by April 5 for K-5 students and April 28 for students in grades 6-8. Last night at a special [School Committee Meeting of the Whole](#), the School Committee voted to approve a waiver request to DESE that will allow us to transition K-5 students to a five-day in-person model on a slightly extended timeline. We are hopeful that DESE will be amenable to our waiver, given that our district has been remote for the entire year, and we have recently started phasing students back in on a timeline that allows for students and staff to get reoriented to in-person instruction. Our proposed new timeline would allow us to continue phasing groups of students into a hybrid model first, then have all Pre-K to grade 8 students back in-person 5 days a week on April 28. We plan to send the waiver request to DESE by the end of this week, and in the meantime will continue to bring students back to hybrid in-person learning according to our phased schedule.

- [Proposed New Transition to Full-Time In-Person, Schedule of Phases](#)
- [Proposed Transition to Full-Time In-Person, by Grades](#)

More than 80% of grades 1-8 families who responded to a brief survey administered earlier this week have indicated their preference for having their child return to 5-day in-person learning. We have also administered a survey to pre-K and K families, and will submit survey results as part of our waiver request to DESE. Any family may choose to have their child remain in remote learning. **We will follow up with a survey for students in grades 9-12 once we receive additional guidance from DESE on the return of high school students.** SHS will also continue to explore and expand ways to bring high school students into the new SHS building throughout March and April, with a particular focus on the Class of 2021.

This week, we are welcoming our second group of students and staff back to in-person learning. Teachers in Phase 2B taught remotely from their classrooms on Monday and Tuesday of this week; students return tomorrow. Phase 2B includes additional groups of students in high needs programs, English learners (K-8) in SEI 1, grade 9-12 students in Multilingual Learning Labs, and some CTE students. The next wave of students and educators (Phase 3A) returns next week and marks the start of our hybrid in-person model, which has students divided into two cohorts: cohort A attends in-person Monday/Tuesday and is remote Wednesday through Friday; cohort B attends in-person Thursday/Friday and is remote Monday through Wednesday. Phase 3A includes pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes, the Somerville Child Care Center, Next Wave / Full Circle, and additional populations of students in high needs programs. Pre-k and kindergarten teachers in Phase 3A will teach remotely from their classrooms on March 22 and 23 (Monday and Tuesday). **As a reminder, we adjusted the first week's schedule for pre-k and kindergarten students to half days as opposed to small group 30-minute Classroom Orientation visits as noted in a previous update.**

Pre-K & K: Week of March 22. Half Day Phase-In Days: A short and intentional phase-in establishes routines that teachers can build upon while children are adapting and developing stamina for in-person learning. Pre-k and kindergarten students will come to school with their cohort for 1 day of shortened learning time.

- o Cohort A - Thursday, March 25; Cohort B - Friday, March 26
- o 8:45 a.m. - 11 a.m.
- o Grab and Go Lunch

We will continue to contact families as they become eligible to return. We also want to remind families that as part of our comprehensive set of [health and safety measures](#), students and staff are required to go through baseline testing prior to returning to in-person instruction, and to subsequently participate in routine Covid-19 assurance testing. Families will be notified about baseline testing schedules as their scheduled return date approaches. Visit our [Transition to In-Person Learning Website](#) for more information and updates about our reopening.

We will continue to keep you informed weekly as we transition to in-person learning, and will confirm the proposed transition schedule once we hear back from DESE next week. We are excited to have students and staff back in our classrooms!

Respectfully,

Mary Skipper, Superintendent of Schools